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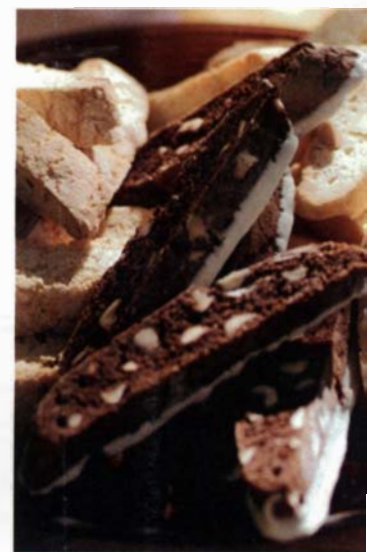


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OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1994 ISSUE 5



62
Chutneys



32 Biscotti



57 Winter Squash

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Letters
- 10 **Q&A** *Sulfites in wine, storing chopped garlic, vegetarian protein sources*
- 14 **Notes** *Professional ranges for the home, butter from heaven*
- 18 **Food Science**
How starch works
- 22 **Tips** *Carving turkey breast, seeding peppers, prying open oysters*
- 72 **Basics** *Choux pastry, putting up preserves*
- 76 **Flavorings**
Horseradish
- 78 **Calendar**
- 80 **Reviews** *How-to-bake-a-cake books*
- 89 **Advertiser Index**
- 89 **Recipe & Technique Index**
- 90 **Tidbits**

On the cover: *Making a Classic Tarte Tatin*, p. 68; *Scallops*, p. 64.

Cover photo, Martha Holmberg; inset, Robert Marsala. This page: top, Susan Kahn; middle and bottom, Suzanne Roman.

ARTICLES

- 26 **Make an Autumn Menu with Roasted Duck**
by Tom Douglas
A two-part cooking method means it's easy to orchestrate this dinner
- 32 **Biscotti for Any Time of Day** *by Emily Luchetti*
Baking twice gives these cookies a distinctive crispness and a long life
- 37 **Two Steps to Moist Pork Chops** *by Charles Saunders*
Today's lean pork needs extra care to keep it juicy
- 40 **Shiitakes** *by Jimmy Sneed*
These meaty mushrooms are rich, chewy, and love to absorb flavor
- 44 **Talking Tea** *by Ari Weinzwieg*
If all you know are tea-bag brews, you're in for an explosion of flavors
- 48 **Easy, Exotic Grilling** *by Rick & Ann Yoder*
Satays of vegetables or meat make satisfying finger food
- 52 **Three Breads from One Simple Dough** *by Jessica Shah*
Quickly turn flour, oil, and water into delicious Indian flatbreads
- 57 **Winter Squash Makes Autumn Flavors Last**
by Odessa Piper Stuff, steam, and purée this good keeper
- 62 **English Chutneys** *by Richard Cawley*
Rich and complex in flavor, these sweet-and-savory preserves are easy to make
- 64 **From Bay or Sea, Scallops are Sweet** *by Charlie Coppola*
A look inside the shells of these tasty mollusks
Two great scallop dishes
by Johanne Killeen & George Germon 66
- 68 **Turning Out a Classic Tarte Tatin** *by Anne Willan*
This stunning upside-down caramel apple dessert is simple to prepare

If you're seeking an outlet for your thoughts on topics like our most recent baking article, genetically engineered tomatoes, or your food and cooking philosophies, look no further. Send your letters on these or other topics to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

KIT LETS YOU RETIN COPPER POTS AT HOME

In the Q&A column of *Fine Cooking* #3, there was a question about retinning copper. Years ago, when I wanted to retin my pots, no one had even heard of the process. Then I heard about the Tin Lizzie kit, produced by Sue Lyon and her company, Aux Cuisines, Inc. I ordered the kit and have been retinning since. I'm still not great at it, but it works—and I'm still alive!

—Leon Moburg,
Redlands, CA

Editor's note: If you want to try retinning at home, you can order the Tin Lizzie kit from Aux Cuisines, 43 Saddle Ranch Lane, Hillsdale, NJ 07642. The kit costs \$15.95, postage-paid by first-class mail. You also can call owner Sue Lyon at 201/664-8775, but she warns that if no one's in, you won't get an answer; she doesn't have an answering machine. The Tin Lizzie kit is also available from Zabbar's, 2245 Broadway, New York, NY 10024; 212/787-2000.

NECESSITY'S CHILDREN

I was amused by the article entitled "The 'Oh-Well' Cuisine" (*Fine Cooking* #2, p. 82). It reminded me of my college days when I had to make do with a lack of culinary hardware. I didn't own a rolling pin or pastry cloth; as a substitute, I found that an empty Absolut vodka bottle with a white dress sock (never worn) rolled the dough wonderfully on the back of a heather-gray T-shirt. I used the other sock as a strainer. These substitutions worked terrifically, and no one knew that socks helped to create their meals. I had a friend who had a constant craving for frozen pizza, but didn't own an oven. His

solution was to cook it in the dishwasher's dry cycle.

I'm sure that you've received letters from people who are finally ready to admit their own desperate kitchen substitutions. It would be fun to see a list of the more creative ones.

—Todd Michael Riegler,
Atlanta, GA

MEASURING GLUTEN GROWTH

Regarding Professor Ponte's comments on instruments that measure gluten development (*Fine Cooking* #2, p. 4), I found an inexpensive way to obtain precise measurement. If you install an AC ammeter on your electric mixer, it will measure the amperage the motor uses. When the meter drops, the gluten is relaxing. The device is sold at electrical equipment warehouses and hardware stores. A bit of trouble, to be sure, but not too much for the perfectionist.

—Tom Dunn
Singer Island, FL

PASTA THICKNESS A MATTER OF TOLERANCE

In her wonderful cookbook, *The Splendid Table*, Lynne Rossetto Kasper recommends the Imperia pasta machine because she says the Atlas machine won't get the dough thin enough. In the premier issue of *Fine Cooking*, Daniel C. Rosati recommends the Imperia because he says the Atlas gets the dough too thin. Interesting. I'm certain this is caused by the assembly tolerance allowed by both manufacturers of these machines. I have an Imperia and a friend has the Atlas, and the machines are basically the same. An eccentric shaft adjusts the outside roller, and the shaft has an indexing knob that allows the user to change the setting. If the machine you're using rolls the dough too thin or thick, the knob can be removed from the shaft and re-indexed to the proper position. Any appliance repair person or neighborhood tinker will be able to do this.

—Jim Conner,
Hutchinson, MN

HOW MUCH FAT?

There's only one thing I find somewhat disappointing about *Fine Cooking*, and I'm hoping I'll see it corrected in future issues. I'm sure you're aware that people

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Writing an article

Fine Cooking welcomes articles, proposals, manuscripts, photographs, and ideas from our readers, amateur or professional. We'll acknowledge all submissions, return those we can't use, and pay for articles we publish. Send your contributions to *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

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are concerned with nutritional analysis of the foods they cook. I find this information extremely helpful in keeping track of the amount of fat my family eats, and it also helps me decide when I need to modify a recipe to keep the fat intake in our daily diet within the recommended 30% range. To my mind, this analysis is far more useful than presenting special low-calorie recipes. I hope you'll consider incorporating this information.

—Diana Stiegler,
Albuquerque, NM

RENNET OR RENNIN, IT'S STILL CHEESE

We noted an error in Ari Weinzwieg's description of how cheese is made (*Fine Cooking* #1, p. 49). Rennet is any agent of either animal or vegetable origin that causes milk to clot. Rennin is rennet that has been obtained from ruminant animals. Rennin has been in short supply for some years, but is now available as recombinant rennin. This is the first genetically engineered food ingredient.

—Sharon & Patrick Oriel,
Midland, MI

HURRY CURRY

I was delighted to read Aminni Ramachandran's article, "South Indian Chicken Curry" (*Fine Cooking* #2), since my roots also are in Kerala, India. However, since I have to cook quickly for lack of time, I have several shortcuts for cooking foods native to a slower pace of life.

I stock commercially available jars of chopped garlic, and I always keep a gingerroot in a sealed plastic bag in the freezer. I break off a small section at a time, but it also can be peeled and

chopped before freezing. Also, Thai coconut milk (available in most Asian groceries) is an excellent product, and freezing it in ice-cube trays gives you small portions to use as needed. Finally, I cook curries in a small pressure cooker. All told, my curries are done in half an hour from start to serving. The best part of cooking Indian curries is that leftovers actually taste better the next day!

—Hima Thomas, Sturbridge, MA

MODERN KITCHEN SEEKS WOOD-BURNING OVEN

I would be very interested in a comprehensive article about the construction and use of wood-burning ovens. Are they feasible for use in a home or in a community building that serves large numbers?

—Nan Crocker, Ketchum, ID

THE FINE ART OF WEIGHING FLOUR

In the Letters department of *Fine Cooking* #3, you discuss two flour-related topics: weight vs. volume measures, and the gluten content of flours. Because there are differences in protein contents between brands of flours, you never can know exactly how much flour you'll need. Weight is more precise than volume in flour measurement, but unless you know the flour's exact protein content, getting the appropriate quantity is still something of an art.

A couple of years ago, when I was the head cook at a Plymouth, Massachusetts, retreat, I received King Arthur Special Flour from two different purveyors. One company marketed the flour as all-purpose, the other as bread flour. To confuse matters further, I received the store

brand of King Arthur as a substitution on an order, and it too was labeled all-purpose. When I called King Arthur in Vermont, they explained that the "special" flour was high in gluten—that is, a bread flour—and the supermarket version was actually all-purpose.

At a Culinary Institute of America class, Chef Richard Coppedge explained that King Arthur all-purpose flour was higher in gluten-forming proteins than most other all-purpose flours. He also said that humidity had a definite effect on the amount of water he used in baking. This explains why bread recipes, whether you're using weight or volume, need a range for flour quantities.

—David Shewmaker,
Ashfield, MA

Editor's note: Ellen Davies, director of sales and marketing at King Arthur Flour, concurs with Shewmaker's conclusion that both humidity and a flour's protein content are factors in how much flour a recipe needs. According to Davies, King Arthur flour does have a higher gluten content than most other all-purpose flours. However, King Arthur also makes a high-gluten flour—King Arthur Special—that's designed for breadmaking, but would produce tough biscuits and pie crusts. The difference between these high- and higher-gluten flours, says Davies, "is like the difference between skim milk and whole milk." She offers an additional caution: a flour's protein content can vary with the crops. Last year's crop was poor, which meant protein-poor flour. Davies says this year's crop is shaping up as an excellent one. ♦

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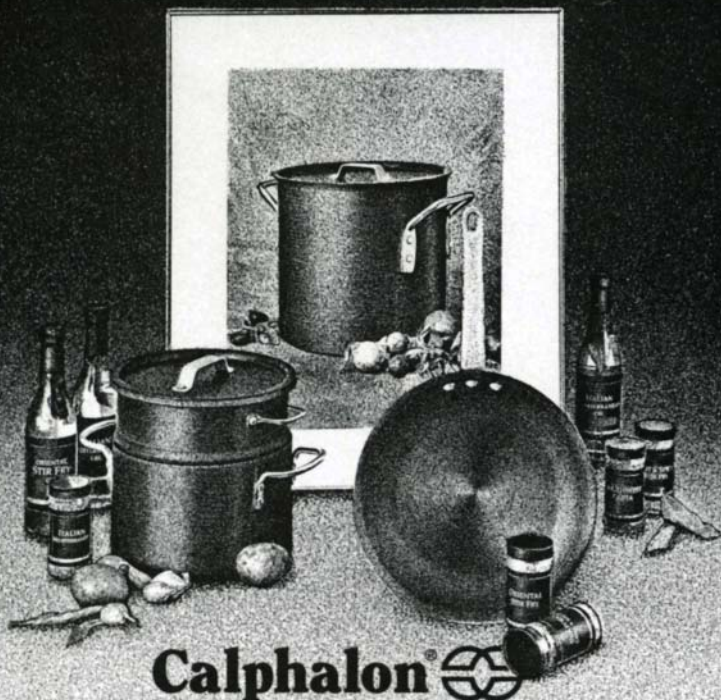
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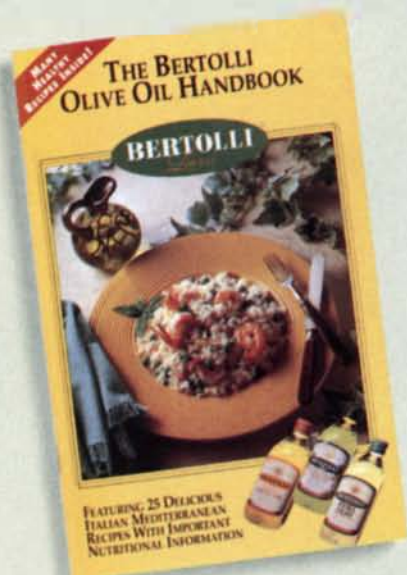
Toast:	1 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup finely chopped onion	Salt, to taste
1 Tbsp. Bertolli Extra Light Olive Oil	Roasted Peppers with Herbs:
1-1/2 cup reduced sodium chicken broth	1 jar (7 ounces) roasted red peppers, rinsed and drained
1 cup water	1 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil or parsley
2/3 cup yellow corn meal	1 Tbsp. Bertolli Extra Light Olive Oil

1. Polenta Toast: Combine onion and olive oil in a 4-quart saucepan; stirring over low heat until tender, about 5 min. Stir in broth. In a separate bowl combine water and corn meal; stir into the broth and cook, stirring until mixture boils and is thick, about 10 min. Add cheese and salt, to taste.

2. Line a 9x9-inch baking pan with foil; spray foil lightly with olive oil cooking spray. Add polenta and spread in a smooth layer with spatula. Refrigerate until cold and firm, about 2 hours. Turn polenta out of pan and peel off foil. Cut into triangles. Preheat oven to 425°F. Spray a non-stick coated baking sheet with olive oil cooking spray. Arrange triangles on pan without touching.

3. Bake on bottom rack until browned on bottom, about 15 min. Turn and bake until browned and crisp.

4. Meanwhile cut peppers into even portions. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with herbs. Arrange on top of each triangle. Serve warm or at room temperature.



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SULFITES IN WINE

Most labels on wine bottles have a sulfite warning. Are sulfites bad for you? Do they occur naturally, are they byproducts of the winemaking process, or are they added as a preservative and flavor enhancer? What specific sulfite compounds do wines contain?

—Colin McCarthy,
Haverhill, MA

George Rose replies: Sulfites are a class of sulfur compounds, of which sulfur dioxide is a member. Sulfites are sometimes added to foods as a preserving agent, and winemakers add sulfur dioxide as an antioxidant during the grape-crushing stage. This helps ensure that the wine maintains consistent quality throughout production. Sulfites also occur as a natural byproduct of grape fermentation. Most people have no problem with the very small amount of sulfites found in wine, but a tiny fraction of the population have allergic reactions to sulfites in any amount. Hence, the sulfite warning found on wine labels.

George Rose is the director of public relations for Fetzer Vineyards in Hopland, California.

CAN CHOPPED GARLIC BE STORED?

What are the safety limitations of storing fresh, chopped garlic in olive oil? I have several half-pint jars in my refrigerator, but I've heard that it isn't recommended to store garlic this way for more than 24 hours, due to the possibility of food poisoning. Is this true? Can anything be done to salvage these jars?

—Kathy Alden,
Ramona, CA

Janet Hazen replies: You're not in any danger of food poisoning, but falling victim to stale, acrid garlic far past its prime is a strong possibility. Once chopped, garlic immediately begins to lose its pungency, character, and taste. Putting

chopped garlic in oil only slows this process, and rather minimally; the garlic will retain a semblance of freshness for only two to four days.

If keeping chopped garlic in oil still appeals to you, there are a few guidelines to remember. Put the garlic in oil immediately after chopping; garlic oxidizes upon contact with air, which causes the characteristic raw garlic smell and encourages discoloring and decomposition. Always keep chopped garlic in oil in the refrigerator. And, after the garlic's two- to four-day life span is complete, you can use the garlic-infused oil as long as the garlic is removed and the oil is stored in the refrigerator. However, that oil shouldn't be used to store future batches of chopped garlic.

On the whole, keeping chopped garlic in oil seems more trouble than it's worth. Unless you use enormous quantities of chopped garlic, I recommend chopping fresh garlic as you need it.

Janet Hazen is the author of a dozen cookbooks, including *Garlic* (Chronicle, 1992), *Hot, Hotter, Hottest* (Chronicle, 1992), and *Rolled, Wrapped, and Stuffed: Great Appetizers from Around The World* (Aris, 1991).

HOW TO FIND AND CANDY CITRON

I'd like to try candying citron. My father-in-law remembers that his family grew citron on its South Carolina farm in the 1930s, and that citron was shaped like a butternut squash and had the color of a watermelon.

Can you give me a source for citron, as well as a method for candying it?

—Joanne Kellar Bouknight,
Greenwich, CT

Jeanne Lesem replies: The fruit you're describing is not a citron, but a citron melon. The fruits are entirely unrelated. Citron is an aromatic lemon with a very thick, rough skin that's grown primarily in the Mediterranean. The citron melon also is very thick-skinned, but it grows wild throughout the southern United States and resembles a watermelon in both color and scent. The flesh of a citron melon has a spongy texture and almost no flavor, but the rind can be candied or

pickled as you would watermelon rind.

In the South, the citron melon is so common and hardy that it is seen as a sort of pesky weed. That poor reputation, combined with its near absence of flavor, makes the chances of finding a retail source for citron melon very slim. However, if you have fond memories for candied citron melon rind, I recommend you transfer your enthusiasm to watermelon rind. If anything, the flavor will be better.

Jeanne Lesem is the author of *Preserving Today* (Knopf, 1992).

MUST BREAD RISE TWICE BEFORE BAKING?

Why do breads with regular yeast require two risings? Why can't you put the item in the oven after one rising?

—Whitney Scott,
Washington, DC

Beth Hensperger replies: Contrary to popular belief, bread doesn't always need two risings.

This is what happens when bread rises: Yeast breads rely on a live, one-celled plant microorganism, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. When you mix a ¼-ounce package of dried yeast (which contains billions of dormant cells) with wheat flour and liquid, the yeast cells "wake" and begin feeding on the complex carbohydrates and sugars in the flour. This activity produces alcohol and carbon-dioxide gas. Handling the dough also develops a protein in the wheat flour—gluten. This gluten absorbs lots of moisture and becomes a stretchy, mesh-like network. The yeast's gases become trapped within the gluten's mesh, and as the yeast breathes and multiplies, the dough reacts by rising.

The amount of time the dough rises affects the bread's finished qualities, including the bread's texture, crust, and flavor. For example, if you use hard wheat flour to create a porous peasant bread with a tangy flavor and a crusty look, several long risings are essential. Old-fashioned soft, fine-crumbed pan loaves may be mixed, formed immediately into loaf shapes that rest until doubled in bulk, and then baked with excellent results. So while recipes may call for double risings—one after the

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dough is kneaded and another after it's shaped—only one rise to double the dough's bulk is necessary for producing a tasty bread.

Keep in mind that dough made from soft wheat flours (such as all-purpose) need less activation and fermentation to develop, while high-protein bread flour needs more. Several risings will not hurt it. Cool-rise recipes call for forming loaves or rolls and then resting the dough in the refrigerator. This eliminates the first rising stage and creates a bread of both fine taste and texture.

Beth Hensperger is the author of Bread and Baking Bread: Old and New Traditions, both published by Chronicle Books (1988 and 1992, respectively).

VEGETARIAN PROTEIN SOURCES

Are mock duck and seitan both wheat gluten? If so, how are they similar and different? What are some good recipe sources?

—Glenny Whitcomb,
Stockbridge, WI

Julie Gerber replies: Seitan, a wheat protein, is 100% wheat gluten. Mock duck, a vegetarian imitation of duck meat, is sometimes made from seitan. However, in many Asian restaurants mock duck is prepared with *yuba*, a soy-bean byproduct. Both seitan and yuba were developed centuries ago in China and Japan by Zen Buddhists, who follow a very strict vegetarian diet for religious and philosophical reasons.

Seitan is similar in taste and texture to meat, and it's often called "wheat meat." It's made by separating the starch and bran from the gluten in whole-wheat flour. The glutinous mixture is then cooked in a soy sauce and ginger broth. High in protein, this wheat gluten product can be baked, boiled, grilled, and sautéed. Seitan can be made at home, but it's a time-consuming process. Seitan is usually available in natural foods stores.

Yuba is made from the thin film that forms on heated soymilk. In the Far East, yuba specialty shops make and sell fresh,

half-dried, and fully dried yuba. In the United States, dried yuba is available in many Asian food stores, under the label of "dried bean curd," and it comes in both sheets and rolls. Dried yuba is 50% protein and is rich in minerals. Yuba tends to be tough and rubbery, but by soaking it in water and flavoring it, yuba can be made to resemble duck, turkey, and chicken.

For seitan and yuba recipe suggestions, I recommend the following books:

- *Friendly Foods*, by Brother Ron Picarski (Ten Speed Press);
 - *Complete Guide to Macrobiotic Cooking*, by Aveline Kushi (Warner Books);
 - *Kathy Cooks...Naturally*, by Kathy Hoshijo (The Self-Sufficiency Association); and
 - *Good Food from a Japanese Temple*, by Soei Yoneda (Kodansha International).
- Julie Gerber, M.Ed., is a licensed nutritionist in the state of Florida. A vegetarian for the last 22 years, she is a director of the Bread of Life Natural Foods Market & Restaurant in Fort Lauderdale.* ♦

The Art Of Sushi

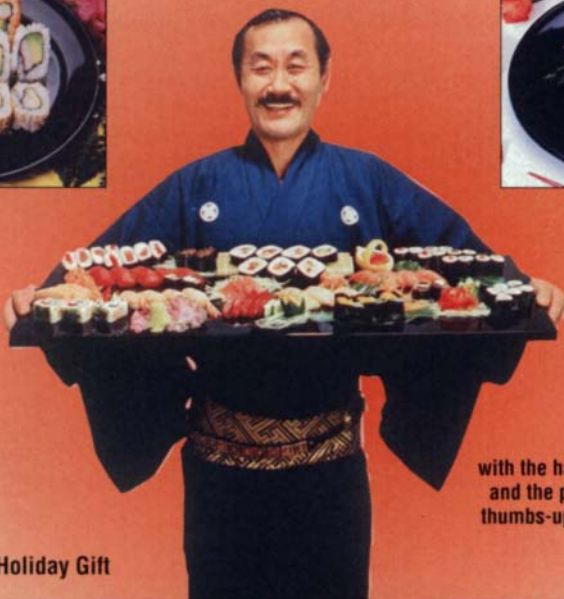
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Viking (601/455-1200)	VGSC305	29 ⁷ / ₈ Wx24 ¹ / ₁₆ D x35 ⁷ / ₈ –37 ⁵ / ₈ H	\$2800	Max. 15,000 Min. 1,000	Four burners with an optional wok ring and griddle	Infrared	Switchable convection/ conventional
Five Star (800/553-7704)	TF280-W	30Wx24Dx36H	\$2500	Max. 14,000 Min. 400	Four burners with an optional wok ring and griddle	Standard gas or electric	Convection
Dynasty (213/728-5700)	DGR30-4	30Wx29 ¹ / ₂ Dx36H	\$2150	Max. 15,000 Min. 1,000	Four burners	Infrared	Conventional (convection available at additional cost)

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British thermal units, or Btu, are the standard by which gas-burner power and flame size are measured. Common household ranges are usually limited to about 8,000 Btu, but professional-weight stoves often boast close to 15,000 Btu per burner. You don't always need full power, so it's also important to know how low a burner will go.

The chart above lays out basic information on four models that fit into a standard fitted kitchen. *Fine Cooking* has not tested any of these models.

—Matthew Kestenbaum, *Fine Cooking*

Finding a Better Butter

When I first heard about Plugrá, an unsalted, European-style butter made in the United States, I found it hard to believe that one butter could really outperform another. So I tried a few tests to determine how Plugrá tasted and reacted in the kitchen as compared to a good-quality national name brand.

Most high-quality butters contain 80% butterfat—the rest is water and milk solids. Plugrá (pronounced ploogRAH) boasts 82% butterfat. This higher butterfat means less water (approximately 10% less).

The raw taste and texture difference between Plugrá and the national brand was telling. Plugrá is remarkably smooth and satiny. Its lower melting point causes it to melt immediately in your mouth. The flavor is complex and rich, with a

pleasant tangy finish. In comparison, the national brand maintains a more “plastic” feel in your mouth and the taste is relatively bland—even somewhat oily.

I began by making two pastries dependent on butter: puff pastry and a straight pie crust. In both cases, the most noticeable aspect of working with Plugrá was its elasticity and relatively dry texture. Where other butters tend to break up into small bits during the layering of a laminated dough like puff pastry, Plugrá held together and allowed me to make a dough with hundreds of very thin layers.

Like most comparisons, it's hard to see the differences until you work with the two products side by side. The uncooked puff pastry made with Plugrá was firm and had a nice sheen. The dough made with the national brand, which appeared floury, began to sag and become mushy.

After baking, the rise of the Plugrá pastry was impressive—a good 25% higher—and the taste was more pronounced and richer without being heavy or greasy.

In the next test, I used the two butters to make a standard pie crust. The Plugrá pie crust was easier to roll out and work with. However, because of the lower moisture content, there was no “weeping” at all in the Plugrá crust, and I found that I needed to add a bit more water to hold the crust together. The baked crust had a delicate flaky texture with long, uninterrupted layers. The national-brand butter's crust was more crumbly, although still tender. The rise



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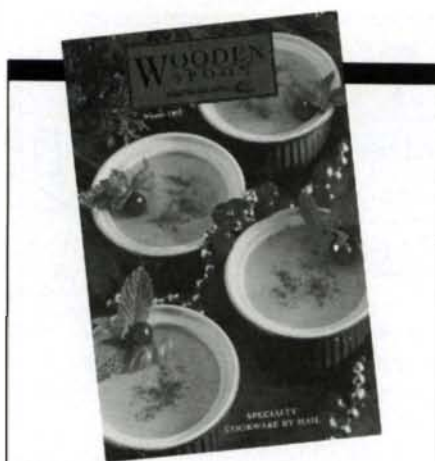
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meanwhile, was noticeably lower than that of the Plugrá crust.

Also in the realm of dessert making, I prepared both a butter cream frosting and a pound cake. The first noticeable difference was how well the Plugrá creams, both by itself and with sugar added. Handling the two butters close to room temperature, the Plugrá creamed quickly and easily, while the national-brand butter tended to clump up in the mixer before finally creaming. The sugar did mask some of the sharp taste of the Plugrá, but overall the Plugrá products had a richer, truer butter flavor. I had fewer problems with graininess in the butter cream, and

the pound cake was smoother, resulting in a more tender cake with a finer texture.

I think the ultimate test of a butter is a traditional *beurre blanc* sauce. Plugrá excelled here. The Plugrá sauce thickened much faster than the sauce made with the same proportions of the national brand. Butter sauces occasionally have to be stabilized by adding reduced cream; this was unnecessary with Plugrá. The sauce held up for several hours near high heat without thinning or breaking. The texture was nearly perfect, and the final taste was balanced, rich, and complex. This was opposed to a more "cooked" taste in which the acidity of the wine seemed to sour the sauce made with the national brand.

Next I sautéed sliced button mushrooms in the two butters. The Plugrá produced richer and more appealing savory flavors, while the national brand tasted neutral. I noticed a difference in yields as well, as I began with the same amount of butter and there was considerably more butter coating the mushrooms when I used Plugrá.

I was fascinated by the way the butters clarified. The yield of the clarified Plugrá was greater than that of the national brand, as less water and milk solids separated out. More significantly, the clarified Plugrá maintained its distinctive rich and tangy taste when clarified, while the clarified national brand offered little besides a neutral oily taste.

I highly recommend Plugrá for recipes in which butter plays an important role. Because of the higher butterfat content, however, you may have to adjust some recipes to use less butter. Unfortunately, Plugrá isn't available in individually wrapped quarters which would store better when used at home.

Plugrá European-style butter is available nationally through local distributors. For more information or to find your local distributor, write to Plugrá Distributor, Hotel Bar Foods, 650 New County Rd., Secaucus, NJ 07094, or call 201/865-3000.

—Molly Stevens, a Chef-Instructor at the New England Culinary Institute in Vermont ♦

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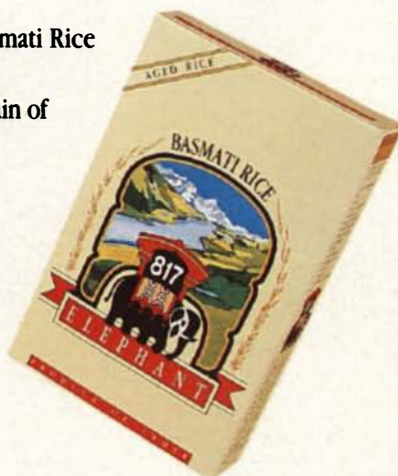
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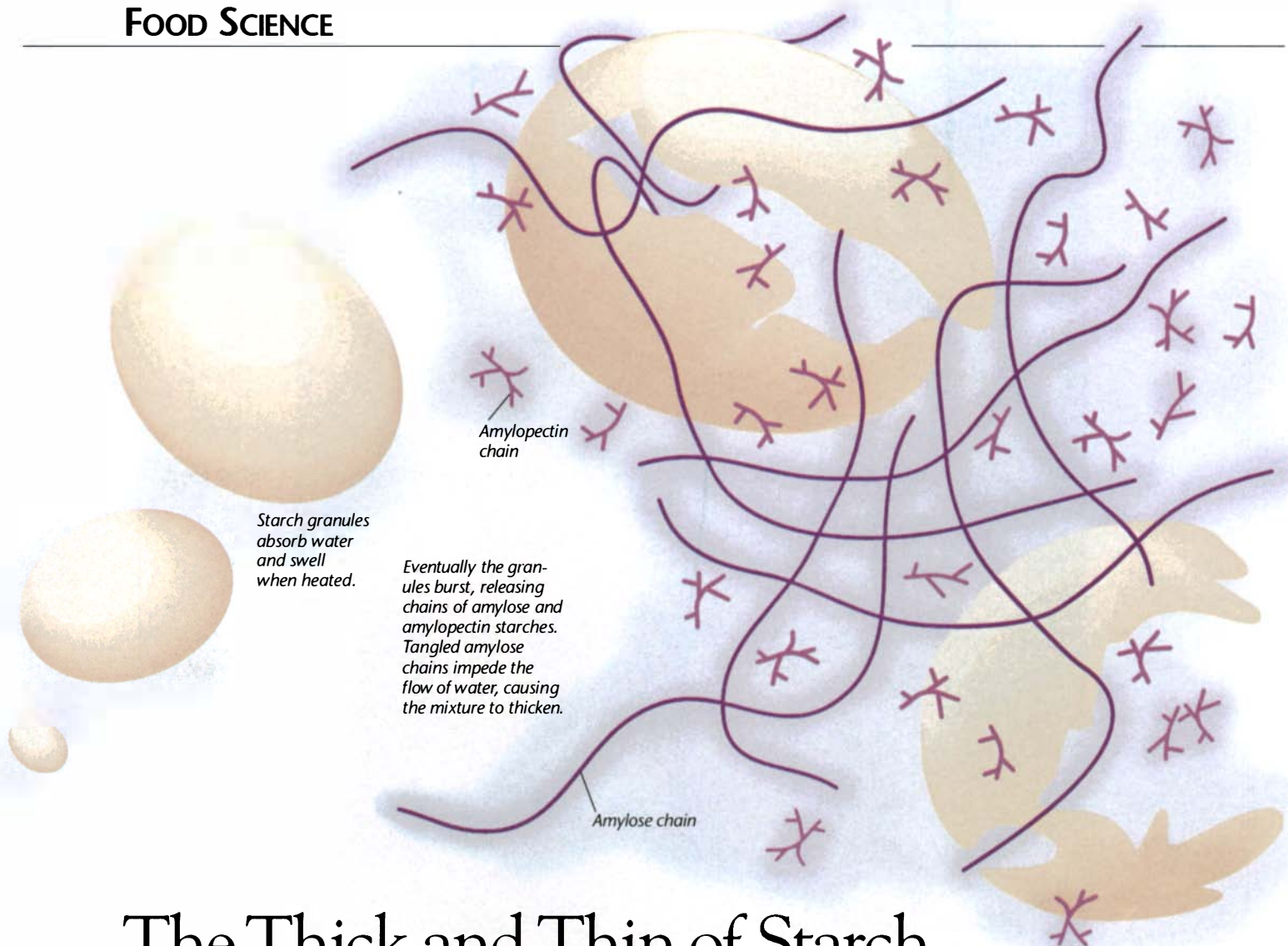
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The Thick and Thin of Starch

Cooks use starches every day to thicken sauces and gravies, to make custards, to thicken the fillings in pie, and to coat foods before frying. The two starches closest at hand are usually flour and cornstarch, but there are many starches, including potato starch, arrowroot, rice starch, tapioca starch, and pure wheat starch. Does it matter which starch you use? To consistently make sauces that are thick without being gluey, to coat a stir-fry with a crystal-clear sauce that shows off the bright green snow peas and vivid red peppers, and to make a pie that's thick enough to cut but doesn't feel like rubber, it's helpful to understand what starch is and how it thickens.

WHAT IS STARCH?

Plants produce starch through the process of photosynthesis. They take in sunlight, carbon dioxide, and water, and

turn them into glucose sugar molecules. These sugar molecules join together into two different patterns—long chains called amylose and short branched chains called amylopectin. Then both the long, bar-shaped amylose and the little, short-branched amylopectin are packed together to form tiny starch granules. Plants tuck away the granules in their seeds, roots, tubers, and stems.

Not all starch granules are alike. Depending on the type of plant, the granules can contain anywhere from 1% to 28% amylose chains, with amylopectin making up the balance. Most starches contain between 17% and 28% amylose, but even that difference affects the way the starches cook.

HOW STARCHES THICKEN

Picture a granule with layers and layers of starch one on top of the other like an

onion. When you stir starch granules into cold water, the granules are dispersed in the liquid but retain their size and shape. As you heat the starch and water, the molecules inside the granules begin to move more rapidly and the bonds between them weaken, allowing water to seep into the granule and make it swell. Between 150° and 212°F, depending on the type of starch, granules can hold many times their weight of liquid—up to 40 times with ordinary starches and up to hundreds of times with superabsorbent starches.

At this point, somewhere just short of boiling, the greatly swollen granules pop, and the chains of amylose and amylopectin rush out into the solution. Both the long, bulky amylose molecules and the puffed, empty granules make a tangled network that retards the movement of water. Instead of moving freely, the water must move between the



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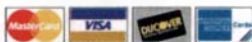
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starch chains, moving slowly like water poured through a colander. The compactly branched amylopectin molecules also get in the way of the water movement, but less so. If you stir the mixture too vigorously, you can deflate some of the puffed granules that are getting in the water's way, and actually thin the mixture.

As the starch mixture cools, the long amylose molecules slow their movement and bond to each other. Amylose chains bond more and more tightly as they cool, forming a solid mass.

At this point, the amylose and amylopectin content of the starch becomes quite important. Starches high in amylose make sauces and gravies that are clear when hot but turn slightly opaque when cooled. When cold, they're very thick—thick enough to cut with a knife. The bonds between the amylose chains become very tight when the starch mixture is frozen. In fact, water is forced out of the crystallized structure, making the sauce weepy and runny once it is defrosted. Amylopectin, on the other hand, makes sauces that are clear hot or cold, but never get firm enough to cut with a knife. These sauces freeze a bit better than high-amylose starches.

WHICH STARCH TO USE

There are times when a cook needs a starch that is crystal-clear. It would be a shame to make a cherry pie with a starch that makes a cloudy mess of bright red cherries. And there are times when a cook needs a starch that sets up firm enough to cut. A coconut cream pie or lemon meringue pie that is a thick soup is a disaster. How can a cook tell which starch has a lot of amylose (25% is relatively high) or which has a lot of amylopectin?

Nature has simplified this a little for us. The ordinary grain starches, such as corn and wheat starch, are high in amylose and have typical amylose characteristics—they can be clear when hot, slightly opaque when cold, and set up thick enough to cut with a knife. Flour will always make an opaque sauce because it contains proteins, but pure wheat starch will produce a clear gel when hot.

Root starches, such as arrowroot and tapioca (from cassava), contain significant amounts of amylopectin and have typical amylopectin characteristics. They make beautiful crystal-clear coatings, hot or cold, but do not set up thick enough to cut with a knife.

Many cooks have limited themselves to flour and cornstarch as thickeners because they're readily available. I encourage you to try some of the many starches available in Asian markets. You may find tapioca in powdered form, pure wheat starch, and arrowroot at a fraction of the cost you'd pay in a supermarket. Also look for potato starch. Derived from tubers, not true roots, potato starch has less amylose than corn or wheat starch, but more amylose than root starches. It makes a firm, clear gel that has many uses.

When storing starches, remember to keep them very dry in a plastic jar or other airtight container.

PROBLEMS WHEN COOKING WITH STARCH

Has this ever happened to you? You're standing at the stove making the lemon filling for a lemon meringue pie. You've stirred in the cornstarch, but the filling isn't thickening. You continue stirring, but nothing happens. Finally, you add a little more cornstarch mixed in cold water. Then, all at once, the filling reaches the magic temperature, the starch granules pop, and you have absolute glue! The first rule when working with starches is to wait until the mixture reaches a gentle boil before deciding to add more starch.

Dispersing the starch granules—If you simply stir a scoop of flour into boiling stock, the second that those lumps of flour hit the hot stock, the starch on the outside of the lump swells and forms a gel. This waterproof gel now holds that flour lump intact, tightly bound together as a lump for you to bite into later. To prevent lumps, you need to disperse the starch grain by grain. The three classic methods—slurry, roux, and *beurre manié* (kneaded butter)—do exactly this. In a slurry, you disperse the starch in cold water, while in a roux the starch is dispersed in a fat, usually butter. In *beurre manié*, fat and

starch are kneaded together. The fat melts when the mixture is added to a hot sauce, dispersing the starch grain by grain.

Sugar and acid—In large amounts, both acids (like lemon juice or vinegar) and sugar can prevent starches from swelling and gelling. Sugar ties up water and deprives the starches from the water it needs to expand and burst. Acids can cause the starch granules to disintegrate too soon, preventing the starch mixture from forming the tangled network of molecules that makes the mixture thick. When making a filling for a lemon meringue pie, wait until after you have heated the starch and thickened the filling before adding the lemon juice and sugar. If you add too much of either before thickening, the starch may not gel.

Thinning—For a firm pie like coconut cream or the pastry cream filling for a classic fruit tart, once the starch gel has set up and is firm, stirring will thin it. Be sure to stir the Grand Marnier or other flavoring into the pastry cream while it is still pretty hot—before it sets.

Custards that contain egg yolks can have another thinning problem. If you do not bring the custard back to a boil after the egg yolks are added, enzymes (alpha amylase) in the yolks attack and destroy your starch gel. Upon standing, your pie becomes soupy.

Light roux, medium roux, dark roux—New Orleans chef Paul Prudhomme once asked me why it is that a light roux thickens a sauce beautifully, but a dark roux doesn't thicken a sauce much at all. Think about what happens to the starch in a dark roux. The fat and flour are cooked until the mixture is mahogany brown. Those starch granules are so damaged by exposure to high heat that they can no longer do their normal swelling and expanding. The darker the roux, the less its thickening ability. With a dark roux, you sacrifice thickening for flavor.

—Shirley Corriher, a research biochemist by training, teaches food science and cooking classes around the country. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia. ♦



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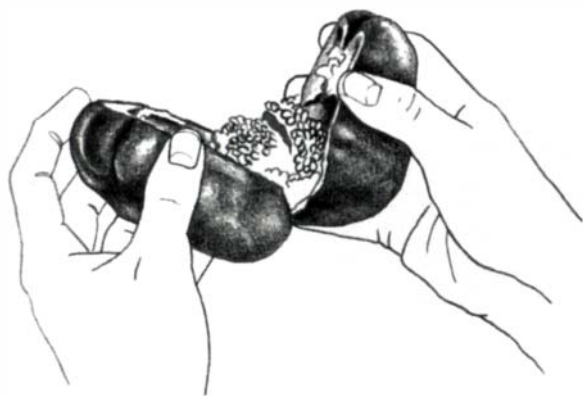
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To quickly remove the stem and meaty bulb of seeds from a bell pepper, slice the pepper from the tip towards the stem, stopping just short of the stem. Pull the two pieces of pepper apart. They'll break off from the stem, leaving most of the seeds and the stem behind.

—Ray Fairbanks, Houston, TX

Flour Mix for Robust Breads

When I make robust, chewy European hearth-style bread, I don't add whole-wheat flour to white flour, as is often recommended. Whole-wheat flour doesn't give quite the right results. Instead, I add one part in ten of untoasted wheat germ (for instance, 1.6 ounces of germ for each pound of white flour). This more closely approximates the old European milling methods.

—David Auerbach, Durham, NC

Recycling Butter Wrappers

When you unwrap a stick of butter, don't throw out the waxy paper. Use it instead of plastic wrap to cover food going into the refrigerator. Not only will the paper

keep refrigerator odors out of the food, but the film of butter left on the paper will also keep your food from drying out, and it will add its own nice buttery flavor, too.

—Sue Schneider, Oakland, CA

Pitting Olives

To pit olives, use the same technique as breaking the skin of garlic cloves. With the flat side of a meat tenderizer or a broad knife, strike the olive firmly. The olive will split, and the pit can then be removed easily.

—Ruby Thomas, Anacortes, WA

Juicing Ginger

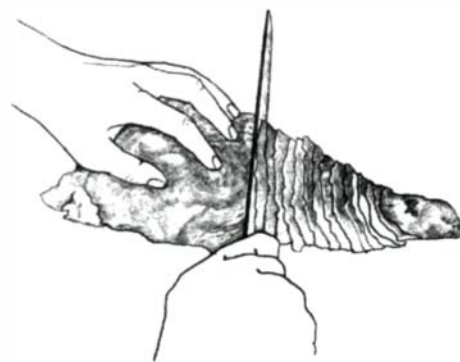
A few teaspoons of ginger juice are delicious for zipping up a consommé or pouring on steamed fish. To make ginger juice without using a messy cheesecloth, finely grate a very fresh, rock-hard piece of ginger about four inches long. Put the grated ginger in a small bowl and press hard against the mass of ginger with the back of a sturdy teaspoon. Tilt the bowl and the juice will run off.

—Susan Asanovic, Wilton, CT

Carving Turkey Breast

For the best-looking slices of turkey breast, and for easier carving, I remove the whole breast from a roast turkey

(after it sits for 30 minutes to cool and to let the juices redistribute). I usually remove the breast after I've cut off the legs and wings. To cut off the breast, I place the knife on one side of the breastbone near the neck and cut toward the tail. As I cut between the bone and the meat, I pry the breast meat away with my hand or a spoon. I can then slice the breast like



a roast, perpendicular to the grain, making the slices as thick or as thin as I like. The resulting slices are more uniform than conventionally carved turkey-breast slices, and I don't have to maneuver around the rest of the bird to get a good amount of meat.

—Gary Turzilli,
Continental Chef,
New York, NY

Icing Fish

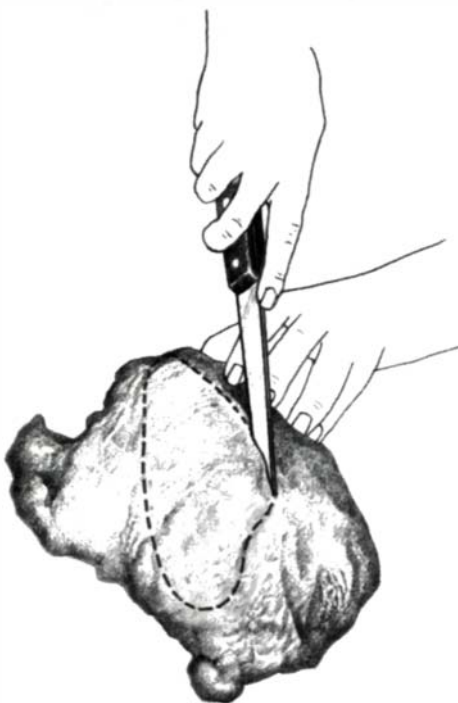
Fish and shellfish should be kept on ice in the refrigerator before they're cooked to keep them from deteriorating. But this is usually messy because the ice melts into a watery solution. I've found that "blue ice" (the packets of blue liquid coated in hard plastic that you use in coolers) is great for keeping fish very cold in the refrigerator. I keep some at the ready in the freezer for when I bring home fresh fish.

—Jerry Y. Seaward,
Pasadena, CA

Grating Nutmeg

I've never bought a nutmeg mill and I don't need one. Instead, I scrape off nutmeg particles with a vegetable peeler or even just a sharp knife. It's easier to control where the nutmeg falls this way and hence easier to gather and measure.

—Ruth Scott, Beavercreek, OH





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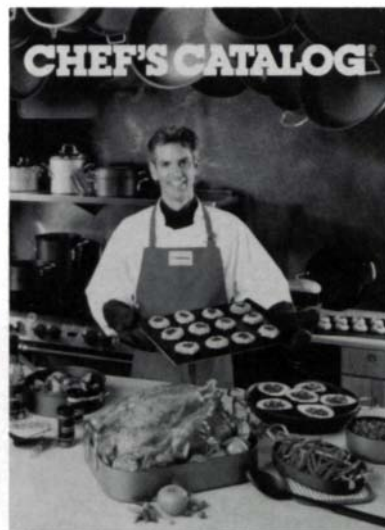
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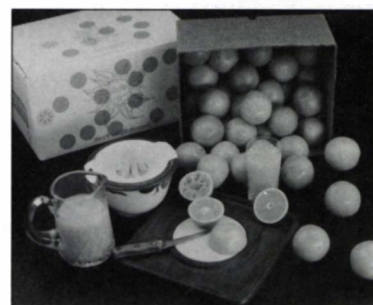
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—Mary MacVean,
Jackson Heights, NY

Moist and Fresh Bread

In my work as a professional baker, I've found that half a cup of instant potato flakes per six cups of flour will give a loaf of bread more body and keep it moister and fresher longer. Another way I improve a loaf's longevity, as well as its rising capacity, is to add a teaspoon of malt powder (available from



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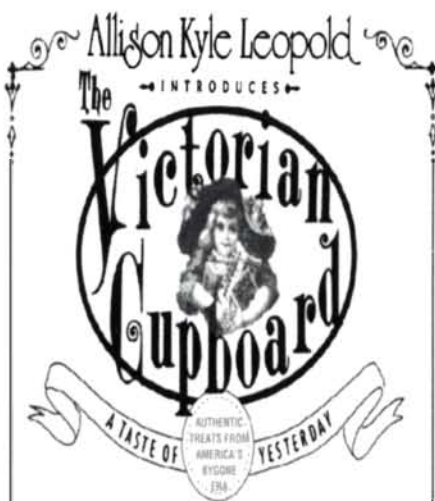


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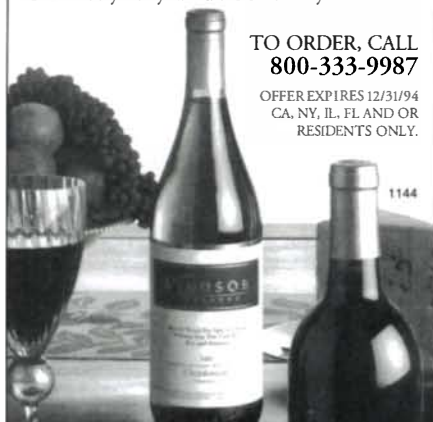
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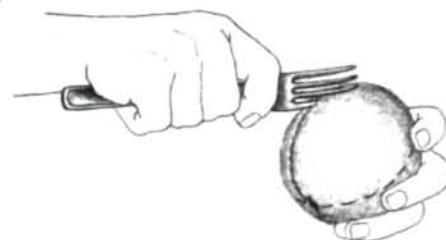
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—Pat Melilli, Wappinger's Falls, NY

Peeling Citrus with a Fork

If you want a good chunk of citrus peel without disturbing the fruit inside, you



can peel any citrus fruit with a fork. Starting at one pole, slip one tine of the fork under the skin of the fruit and cut up and down through the skin all the way back to the starting point. Make one more fork cut at a right angle to the first cut, then peel off the four quarters.

—John Ternille, Naples, FL

Getting the Coffee Out

When using an upright Braun- or Krups-type coffee grinder, turn the grinder upside down while you're still grinding. Stop grinding, lightly tap the grinder on the counter once or twice, and take off the cap. All the ground coffee or spices are in the cap and ready to be dispensed.

—Erin J. Donahue, Westerly, RI

Prying Open Oysters

If you're faced with a sinkful of oysters but don't have an oyster knife to open them, you can use a church-key type of can opener instead.

Hold the oyster with a dishtowel so that the shell doesn't cut you. Find the small opening between the shells on the narrow, hinged end of the oyster. Wedge the pointed tip of the can opener between the shells and, with a quick twist of the wrist, pry the shells apart. You're actually breaking the muscle that keeps the shell closed. Don't work too fast, though, or the shells may splinter. Slide the can opener between the shells all the way around the oyster and then pull the two shells apart.

—Pamela Lloyd Owen,
Newfields, NH ♦

Make an Autumn Menu with Roasted Duck

A two-step cooking method means
it's easy to orchestrate this dinner

BY TOM DOUGLAS

Duck is one of my favorite autumn ingredients. The dark, rich flesh is a natural in cool-weather dishes. And the livers—ah, the livers—fodder for the perfect pâté, served with a big hunk of crusty bread. I love cooking in autumn not only because of duck, but because it's the time of year when I can't wait to dig into the seasonal produce. Hearty greens, like ruby chard and kale, and earthy roots, like parsnips, celery root, and rutabagas, actually look fresh on the market shelves, instead of having that wilted January look. I can still find some of the last naturally ripened tree fruit like Bosc pears, quince, and persimmons. Fragrant, first-of-the-season pineapples, papayas, and other tropicals hit the shelves with jet-age freshness. The menu I'm presenting here incorporates these late fall and early winter ingredients.

SIMPLE RULES FOR MENU DESIGN

Seasonality is one of the three principles I apply when planning a menu. I use produce at its peak and ingredients that fit the “feel” of the season. My second rule is no mixing cultures—no polenta with enchiladas! Third, I work around “the three Ts”:

Taste—fresh flavors that work well together.

Texture—a variety of feelings on the palate, from the crunch of a pear to the chewiness of meat to the melt of creamy mashed potatoes.

Temperature—a mixture of hot, cold, and room temperature components.





For a full-bodied sauce, brown the ingredients thoroughly and use a good red wine. After browning, the author degreases the pan, deglazes with some pinot noir, and then simmers everything with chicken stock.

Cook the duck a second time to make the skin super-crispy and to get rid of the extra fat. Cook it skin side down in a very hot pan until deep golden brown, and then finish with a few more minutes in a hot oven.



Even if I can't achieve the three Ts on one plate, I try to offer the balance in the different courses of my meal. In my autumn menu, I've got lots of taste, textures, and temperatures: crispy-skinned, chewy-fleshed duck served hot, crunchy grilled fresh pear and kale salad served room temperature with a sharp vinaigrette, creamy mash of celery root and potato lively with herbs, and a soft and crunchy combo of silky duck-liver pâté on toasted crostini. The dessert pairs frosty sweet-tart pineapple ice with crisp and slightly spicy-hot ginger cookies.

DUCK KNOW-HOW

Duck has gotten an unfair reputation as a bird that's very fatty and very "gourmet." While it's true that duck does have a lot of fat, my method renders off most of it, so I'm left with very tender, rich meat and crisp skin, but no excess grease. As for being "too gourmet," duck is so versatile that it can take on many guises, from a delicate strip of rare breast meat in a fancy "nouvelle" French dish, to a gutsy Czech braised dish where the duck is cooked with caraway and cabbage until it's falling off the bone.

One of the easiest, and one of my favorite, ways to cook and present duck takes the best from both these styles. The duck flesh is well done, but it still has a firm bite to it, and the skin is very crispy. I roast the duck until it's just done and cut it into serving pieces (so I don't have to carve at the table—not an easy thing to do with duck). I usually take out a couple of bones so it's easier to eat. All this I do ahead of time. When it's time to serve the dinner, I sauté the duck parts, skin side down, for a few minutes to render out any more fat and to crisp up the skin, and then I slide the sauté pan into the oven to reheat the meat. I don't always serve this duck with a sauce, but I love the easy one in this article, made from the duck trimmings and flavored with salty black olives and fragrant fresh orange.

If you're lucky enough to have fresh duck available in your market, as we do in Seattle, then by all means get it, if it smells good and if the skin feels squeaky, not slimy. (I'm not kidding, smell it. It should have little "duck-like" aroma, but it shouldn't smell like old socks.) If you're not happy with the smell and feel, or if you don't have fresh duck, buy a frozen, farm-raised "Long Island duck" or "Peking duck" that you can usually find next to the frozen turkeys and game hens in a grocery store. Sometimes it's better to get a good frozen product than a "fresh" one that's been around too long. Try to buy a frozen bird a few days ahead of your dinner so that it thaws naturally in your refrigerator rather than under running water.

Ducks may look big, but they don't really have much meat on them—they're kind of "hollow" with lots of space in the cavity. A 4½- to 5-pound duck will serve two people a nicely boned-out breast por-

MENU

*Duck-Liver
Pâté Crostini*



*Roasted Duck
with Olive &
Orange Sauce*

*Celery-Root
Purée*

*Grilled Pear &
Kale Salad*



*Pineapple
Sorbet*

*Dahlia Ginger
Cookies*



Be generous with the seasoning. Put fresh rosemary, lemon, salt, and pepper inside the duck, sprinkling more salt and pepper on the outside.



You don't need all this extra skin at the neck opening, so cut it off about an inch from the body. Make sure to pull off and discard any chunks of fat from the neck and tail openings.

tion and a leg and thigh portion. The relatively small yield of a duck is another reason why my recipe, in which the ducks are carved and boned in the kitchen, is good for entertaining. If you had to present whole duck for several guests, you'd need a pretty huge platter. With the recipe in my menu, you can arrange each portion on each guest's plate in the kitchen, or arrange all the portions on a platter that looks appetizing and graceful.

WHICH WINE?

You have a lot of possible wine choices for this meal. Try to pick a wine with a good acid level. For example, the duck and sauce are very rich, so I wouldn't pair the dish with a big, fat burgundy with lots of overripe fruit flavors; instead, I'd choose a good, young Oregon pinot noir, which seems crisper to me. Nebbiolo-based wines from the Barbaresco and Barolo regions of Italy are perfect complements, as is a spicy Tuscan Chianti or a full-flavored syrah-based Rhône wine.

To have the most fun with wine and food pairing, buy four different half-bottles of your favorite wines and come to your own conclusions as to what goes best with the meal. Another fun wine partner is rosé Champagne, which gives you both acid and body. At my restaurant, I've done many Champagne dinners and the wine works beautifully throughout the meal.

ROASTED DUCK WITH OLIVE & ORANGE SAUCE

It's amazing how much fat comes from a five-pound duck—up to two cups—so be sure to roast the ducks on a rack in a pan that will catch the fat during cooking. Pour off the extra fat if your oven starts to get smoky. If you like, save the melted duck fat, strain it, and use it later for frying potatoes—delicious! Duck fat has more flavor and less cholesterol than butter. The strained fat will keep for up to a month in a tightly closed jar in the refrigerator. *Serves four.*

*2 fresh or frozen, thawed ducks,
4½ to 5 lb. each
4 big sprigs fresh rosemary
1 lemon, quartered
Salt and freshly ground black
pepper*

FOR THE STOCK:

*Reserved necks, hearts, gizzards,
and wing tips from 2 ducks
1 large onion, quartered
2 carrots, chopped rough
2 celery ribs, chopped rough
1 leek, trimmed, rinsed, and split
2 shallots, quartered
1 head garlic, unpeeled, cut in half
crosswise
1 cup good red wine (preferably
the wine you'll drink with the
duck)
6 cups homemade chicken stock
(or 3 cups canned low-salt stock
and 3 cups water)
6 black peppercorns
1 bay leaf*

FOR THE SAUCE:

*8 to 10 pitted and halved oil-cured
black olives
Juice and julienned zest of half an
orange (about ¼ cup juice)
½ tsp. chopped fresh thyme leaves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper*

Trim the duck—Retrieve all the parts from the duck cavities—you should have necks, hearts, gizzards, livers, and maybe paper bags. Set the livers aside for the pâté and save the rest of the parts (except the bags) to be browned for the stock. (Even if you don't make the pâté, don't use the livers in the stock. They'll make it very bitter.)

With a sharp knife or poultry shears, cut off the wing tips, two joints from the end. Reserve the wing tips for the stock. Unfold the flap of skin at the neck opening and trim it so it's 1 in. long (see photo at left). The skin shrinks as it cooks, so if you trim it too close, the breast meat will be exposed. Too much neck skin, however, will make the duck too fatty. Pull out any visible lumps of fat from around the cavity opening. Stuff the cavities with the rosemary and lemon quarters, and then season with salt and pepper. Season the outside too. Let the birds sit for about 30 min. The salt dehydrates the skin a little bit and makes for a crispier bird.

Roast the ducks—I don't truss my ducks for roasting: I've found that the denser leg and thigh portions cook more quickly and evenly when they aren't held close to the body, and the breast meat doesn't dry out waiting for the leg and thigh to cook.

Heat the oven to 500°F. Put the ducks in a roasting pan fitted with a rack (I usually use a cake-cooling rack). Make sure they don't hang over the edge. Roast the ducks for 30 min. at the high temperature, then turn the oven down to 350° and cook for 35 to 45 more min. To test for doneness, tilt the duck so the juices run from the cavity. When they are pink-gray instead of red, the duck is done. You can double-check by inserting a thermometer in the thigh; it should read 150° to 160°. I cook my ducks so they're slightly pink at the joint because I'm going to cook them more after carving. Take the ducks from the oven and leave them to cool and firm up (or "set") for about an hour.

While the ducks are roasting, make the stock—Heat a large, heavy-based saucepan or sauté pan, add



The ducks need to rest after roasting. Leave them for 30 minutes to cool down and firm up so you can cut them into portions without burning your hands and without damaging the crisp, roasted skin.



Cutting the duck in the kitchen is easier than carving it at the table. After the duck has cooled slightly, cut it into portions that are cooked again just before service until they're crispy. Here, the author is cutting along the central breastbone and down either side of the wishbone at the neck opening.

the reserved duck parts, and cook for a few minutes until they start to brown. You shouldn't need to add any oil because the duck parts will give off fat as they cook. Add the onions, carrots, celery, leek, shallots, and garlic and continue cooking, stirring the ingredients around so they don't stick, until everything is nicely caramelized, about 15 min. Carefully pour off any accumulated fat and then add the red wine (see photo on p. 27). Boil for a few minutes, scraping the bottom of the pan to dissolve the caramelized juices. Add the stock or water, the peppercorns, and the bay leaf. Simmer for about 1 hour, adding more water or stock if necessary to keep the bones covered. Don't let the stock boil vigorously or it will be cloudy and greasy. Strain the stock through a fine strainer. You should have about 4 cups. Let it sit for 5 to 10 min. so the fat floats to the top and then skim.

Make the sauce—Pour the stock into a smaller clean saucepan and simmer to reduce until it's very flavorful and slightly viscous, about 30 min. Add the olives, orange zest and juice, and thyme, and season with salt and pepper. Simmer a few more minutes so the flavors develop, taste again, and set aside until you're ready to serve.

Carve the ducks—After the ducks have rested and set for about 30 min., cut them into their serving portions. This is best done on a cutting board that's set over your sink because it can be messy. The duck skin is now fragile, so be careful and work slowly or you'll tear the skin. A good, flexible boning knife makes this job easier.

Place the duck back side down, the legs pointing toward you. Feel for the natural division between the leg and the body. Cut into the division and follow the contour of the body cavity with the knife edge facing toward the cavity, so you don't gouge the thigh meat. Bend the leg away from the body to expose the actual joint. Cut through the joint and remove the leg-thigh. Do the same on the other side.

Now turn the duck around so the wishbone (neck end) faces you. Starting from the far end, run your knife down the side of the central breast ridge and along the angle of the wishbone. Repeat on the other side (see photo at left). With your thumb, gently pull the breast meat away from one side of the rib cage, freeing the meat with your knife as necessary. When the breast is released back to the wing joint, cut through the joint. Repeat on the other side. Put all four duck pieces—two breast-wing portions, two leg-thigh portions—skin side down on the cutting board and trim off any fat or gristle. Keep covered and chilled until you're ready to finish cooking. You can prepare the duck to this point up to 24 hours ahead.

Finish the dish and serve—First, heat the oven to 450°. On the range, heat a large ovenproof sauté or frying pan and put the duck pieces, skin side down, in the pan. Cook over high heat until the skin is golden and crispy and more fat has been rendered. Turn over the duck pieces (see photo on p. 26). Tilt the pan and spoon off the accumulated fat. Now put the pan in the oven and cook for another 10 min. until the duck pieces are heated through. Arrange on warm plates or a platter and serve, with the sauce on the side.



CELERY-ROOT PUREE

Celery root, also called celeriac, has gnarly skin that should be peeled with a sharp paring knife. Serves four.

1 1/4 lb. Russet or Yellow Finn potatoes, peeled
1 lb. celery root, peeled
2 oz. (4 Tbs.) soft goat cheese
2 oz. (4 Tbs.) unsalted butter
2 to 4 Tbs. milk or cream, if necessary
1 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley
1 tsp. chopped fresh chervil (optional)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Quarter the potatoes and cut the celery root into pieces about half the size of the potato quarters (celery root

Celery root is very gnarly, so use a sturdy knife to trim and peel it. The green tops are fragrant but not edible, so discard them. You'll lose a lot of the root through peeling, so larger roots yield more usable flesh.

ORCHESTRATING THE MEAL

This menu works beautifully for entertaining since so much can be prepared ahead. Here's a suggested countdown to help organize and time the work.—T.D.

2 days ahead:

- ◆ Thaw ducks, if frozen
- ◆ Make pineapple sorbet

1 day ahead:

- ◆ Trim ducks
- ◆ Make duck stock
- ◆ Make liver pâté

Morning of dinner:

- ◆ Make ginger cookies
- ◆ Roast and portion ducks
- ◆ Make sauce
- ◆ Clean and stem kale
- ◆ Make celery-root purée

Just before sitting down:

- ◆ Spread pâté on toasts
- ◆ Crisp and reheat duck
- ◆ Reheat sauce
- ◆ Reheat purée
- ◆ Grill pears and assemble salad

takes longer to cook). Put the potatoes and celery root in a large pan, cover with cold, salted water, bring to a boil and cook until very tender when poked with a knife, 15 to 20 min., and drain thoroughly. Add the goat cheese and butter and mash with a potato masher. Add a little milk or cream if the mixture is too dry and lumpy. When the texture is fairly smooth, add the herbs and season with salt and pepper. If you like, you can put the cooked potatoes and celery root through a ricer or food mill first, and then add the remaining ingredients. If you make the purée ahead, reheat it in a double boiler so you don't scorch it.

An autumn salad of bitter kale and sweet pear. Douglas likes to combine textures, tastes, and temperatures on one plate, so he serves this room-temperature salad alongside his hot main dish.



GRILLED PEAR & KALE SALAD

At the restaurant, I grill my pears on the kitchen grill, but you can use a ridged grill pan, or even just a heavy skillet. Serves four.

1 small bunch fresh kale, about 1 lb.
1 ripe pear
Extra-virgin olive oil
4 Tbs. walnut oil
2 Tbs. rice vinegar or cider vinegar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Juice of ¼ lemon

Cut off the tough stems from the kale leaves, pull off any tough central ribs, and rinse thoroughly. Blanch the leaves in a large pot of boiling salted water until they're tender but still have a bite to them, about 1 min. Rinse the leaves under cold water to stop the cooking; dry in a salad spinner or on a dishtowel. Set aside until you're ready to assemble and serve the salad.

Heat the grill or the skillet. Cut the pear into eight wedges and cut out any tough core. Brush the wedges with the olive oil and place them on the hot grill or skillet. Cook, turning once, until both sides get nice grill marks or browned edges (if the pear is really ripe, cook it a little less so it doesn't fall apart). Keep warm.

When you're ready to serve the salad, put the kale, pear, walnut oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper in a large mixing bowl. Squeeze in the lemon juice and toss everything gently to coat. Serve immediately.



DUCK-LIVER PÂTE CROSTINI

You can serve these toasts as an appetizer or as a garnish to the main dish. Or make the pâté and save it for an indulgence later; tightly covered, it keeps for at least three days in the refrigerator. Makes about 12 toasts.

2 duck livers
1 tsp. olive oil
1 shallot, chopped
1 bay leaf
¼ tsp. chopped fresh marjoram
2 Tbs. dry sherry
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter, room temperature
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 to 8 slices of toasted French bread, ½-in. thick
Fresh chives for decoration (optional)

Trim any yellowish spots, fat, or gristle from the livers. Heat a small nonstick skillet to very hot. Add the oil and let it just start to smoke. Add the shallot and sauté, shaking the pan, until it starts to soften, about 1 min. Add the livers (stand back because they'll spit), bay leaf, and marjoram and cook, stirring, another couple of minutes, until the livers are just pink in the middle (check by cutting into one with a knife). Add the sherry to deglaze (see photo above), scrape the pan with a wooden spoon to dissolve any caramelized juices, and remove from the heat. Remove the bay leaf.

When the liver mixture is cool, put it in a food processor with the butter. (If you add the livers while they're still hot, they will melt the butter and you won't get the best texture.) Process until very smooth. Season with salt and pepper and refrigerate.

About 30 min. before you're ready to serve, take the pâté out of the refrigerator and leave it at room temperature to soften. To serve, spread a generous dollop on the toasted bread and decorate with chives if you like.

The duck-liver pâté is quick, easy, and delicious. The liver gets a brief sauté with shallots, a splash of sherry, and a pinch of herbs. After a few minutes cooling, the mixture goes into the food processor with lots of butter to become a silky, rich spread.

PINEAPPLE SORBET

It's best to make this sorbet using an ice-cream maker—the texture will be smoother—but you can freeze it “granita-style” without any special equipment (see below). The flavor will still be delicious, but the texture will be slightly grainy. *Makes 3½ cups.*

⅔ cup sugar

⅔ cup water

1 small (1½ lb.), very ripe, fragrant pineapple

2 Tbs. good-quality dark rum

2 tsp. vanilla extract

Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan and heat to boiling, stirring until the sugar is completely dissolved. Remove the syrup from the heat and chill.

Peel and core the pineapple, (making sure to remove all the hard bits) and cut it into chunks. Purée it in a food processor until very smooth. You should have 2 cups. Stir together the sugar syrup, pineapple, rum, and vanilla. Process in an ice-cream maker, following the manufacturer's instructions.

For a granita-style sorbet, pour the mixture into a shallow container. Freeze until a fair amount of ice crystals begin to form, then stir vigorously with a fork to break them up. Repeat the freezing and stirring until the mixture is thoroughly frozen but slushy. Let freeze undisturbed until about 15 min. before serving time.

For sorbet made by either method, let it sit at room temperature to soften slightly before scooping into a ball.



DAHLIA GINGER COOKIES

These chewy cookies are “hot” with fresh ginger—a great foil to the frozen sorbet. The cookies are best eaten the day they're baked, or you can wrap them well and freeze them for up to a month. *Makes 4 dozen cookies.*

6 oz. (12 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened

1 cup sugar

1 egg

¼ cup molasses

1 tsp. grated fresh ginger

(Ingredient list continues)

A refreshing finale—frosty pineapple sorbet and “hot” ginger cookies. Both can be made ahead, so the dessert is perfect for parties.



10 oz. (2½ cups) flour
2 tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. cinnamon
Sugar for dipping

This recipe works best using a mixer fitted with a paddle, but you can use a regular mixer or a wooden spoon. Cream the butter and sugar until smooth. Add the egg, molasses, and ginger and mix a little more until blended. Sift together the dry ingredients, add them to the mixture, and continue mixing until a smooth dough is formed. If the dough seems very soft at this point, put it in the refrigerator for 20 to 30 min.

Heat the oven to 350°. Turn the dough out of the bowl and divide it into about 36 marble-size balls. Roll the balls in sugar and place them on nonstick or parchment-lined baking sheets about 2 in. apart. Flatten the balls slightly with your fingers. Bake in the heated oven until golden brown, about 10 min. Transfer the cookies to a rack to cool completely, then store in an airtight container until ready to serve.

Autumn on a plate.

Crisp-skinned, rich duck, creamy celery-root purée, crunchy pear and kale salad, garnished with a silky pâté of duck liver on toast.

Tom Douglas is chef/owner of The Dahlia Lounge in downtown Seattle. He's the chair of Seattle's Share Our Strength, a national organization that raises money to feed hungry people. In March, he received the James Beard Foundation award for Best Chef in the Pacific Northwest. ♦

Biscotti for Any Time of Day

Baking twice gives these cookies a distinctive crispness and a long life



BY EMILY LUCHETTI

Americans love many types of cookies, but the Italian-born biscotti are the first to seriously rival the popularity of the chocolate-chip cookie. Biscotti are versatile cookies, and their crunch can be habit-forming. They go perfectly with coffee for breakfast, can be nibbled as an afternoon snack, and they're a wonderful accompaniment to many desserts. Biscotti can even end a meal themselves when served with a glass of dessert wine. As the executive pastry chef for the Stars restaurant and cafés, I make several types of biscotti. I'm going to describe how biscotti get their crunchy texture, offer baking tips and suggestions for making your own variations, and give recipes for three distinctly different biscotti.

HOW BISCOTTI GET THEIR CRUNCH

The way biscotti are made is apparent in their name: *biscotti* means "twice-cooked." The dough is formed into logs and baked until golden brown, the logs are then sliced, and the individual biscotti are baked again to give them their characteristic dryness.

Aside from the fact that they are cooked to dryness, biscotti naturally keep longer than other cookies because most versions don't contain butter. The average shelf life is two to four weeks—if they don't get eaten before that! The harder the biscotti, the longer they will stay fresh. Adding butter to the recipe shortens the shelf life to a week.

There are several schools of thought about how hard biscotti should be. Some people like biscotti to be very dry and jaw-breaking hard, so hard that the cookies must be dipped into coffee or wine for fear of breaking teeth. Others prefer biscotti crunchy but not hard. I like the texture in between—crunchy but not so hard that the biscotti have to be dunked.

Generally, biscotti made without butter are drier and harder. Most cookies contain butter, so it's a nice change to bite into the distinct texture of biscotti made without butter. Adding butter provides additional moisture and makes a cookie that's lighter and crunchier, but I think it makes the flavor less intense. Of my three biscotti recipes here, the almond biscotti are the hardest, and the macadamia biscotti, with butter, are the softest.

MIXING THE DOUGH

Biscotti are simple to make. An electric mixer makes the process easier, but a large bowl and a

A nut-lover's dream. You can't have too many nuts in biscotti, though citrus zests, chocolate, and aniseed add their flavor too. Learn how to make traditional Almond Biscotti (left), Triple-Chocolate Biscotti with hazelnuts (middle), and Macadamia-Nut Biscotti (right).



wooden spoon are really all you need. Mix the biscotti dough just until the ingredients are combined, but no longer. If the dough is overmixed, the texture of the biscotti becomes finer and denser. If you do use an electric mixer, it's a good idea to mix in the last bit of dry ingredients by hand to ensure that you don't go too far (see photo above). Beating the eggs together thoroughly before adding them to the dry ingredients will also ensure even incorporation and prevent overmixing.

FORMING THE LOGS

Once the dough is mixed, it will be a little tacky. To shape the dough into a log, lightly sprinkle flour on the work surface, on top of the dough, and on your hands. Use just enough flour to roll out the logs and prevent sticking; you don't want the logs to be covered thickly with flour. With your palms, roll the biscotti dough into even logs (see photos on p. 34). I generally make them two inches in diameter and anywhere from ten to fourteen inches long, depending on the quantity of the dough and the size of the baking sheet. You can adjust these measurements if you like smaller or bigger biscotti, but be sure to take into account that the baking time will change as well. Smaller logs will take less time to bake than larger logs.

Pick up the logs with your hands and transfer them to a baking sheet that has been lined with kitchen parchment, which makes cleanup easier. If

Don't overmix the batter or the biscotti will be fine-crumbed and dense. Turn the dough out of the mixing bowl while it's still crumbly and knead in the last bit of flour by hand.

It doesn't take much pressure to form logs, simply roll out the dough with your hands. Luchetti works on a marble surface, which stays cool and helps keep the dough from sticking.



For small biscotti, shape the dough into long, narrow logs. For larger biscotti, make the logs wider and shorter.



A sharp chef's knife cuts cleanly through the once-baked logs. At this point the cookies are firm but not brittle.



you don't have kitchen parchment, lightly grease the baking sheet before putting the logs on it.

BAKING, COOLING, BAKING AGAIN

Biscotti logs are generally baked at 350°F until they're light golden brown in color, about 30 minutes. Cooking time may vary depending on your oven and on the ingredients in a particular biscotti recipe. When the logs have finished their first baking, they'll have expanded in size and will be firm but not dry. (Biscotti are edible after their first cooking, but they aren't half as good as when twice-baked.)

Chocolate biscotti should bake at 325°. The lower temperature allows for slower baking, which will prevent the cocoa powder from getting over-toasted and giving the biscotti a burnt taste.

After the biscotti logs have cooled, slice them $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick (see photo below). I like to slice the biscotti at a slight diagonal for a nicer presentation, using a very sharp chef's knife. A serrated knife works too, but I've found it doesn't make as clean a cut.

The second baking at a lower temperature lets the biscotti dry out and become firm. I spread the cut biscotti out flat on a baking sheet, though some people like to stand them up so both cut sides are exposed. I've found that it doesn't make much difference—the moisture within the biscotti evens out. At this stage you can vary the hardness of the biscotti a bit—the longer you keep them in the oven, the drier they will get. At a minimum, you want to make sure that the biscotti are not soft in the center before you remove them from the oven (see photo on facing page). If you prefer biscotti that are lighter in texture, make the biscotti recipe with butter instead of reducing the drying time. Store bis-

cotti in airtight containers or well wrapped in the freezer. Don't refrigerate them because they'll get stale quickly.

MAKE YOUR OWN VARIATIONS

There are endless varieties of biscotti. Changing a couple of ingredients can change the whole character of the cookie. For example, the amount and type of citrus zest (orange, lemon, or lime) can be altered, and the type of nuts can be changed as well. The macadamia nuts, almonds, and hazelnuts I've used in the following recipes all make great biscotti, and each nut gives a very different taste. Don't be stingy with the nuts; they're one of the key flavors in biscotti. Too many nuts, however, can cause problems. You need more dough than nuts or the biscotti won't hold together. As a rule, I use about 2½ ounces (about ½ cup) of nuts for every cup of flour. Always toast nuts first to keep them from getting soggy when combined with the dough, and also to bring out their flavor. I like to start with whole nuts because many of them get cut when the biscotti are sliced.

You can play with spices, too. Aniseed is a traditional choice for biscotti; cinnamon and ginger are other popular additions. Keep in mind the strength of the spice when adding it to a recipe. For example, ginger is stronger than cinnamon and should be added in smaller quantities. Nuts and spices can be teamed up to make interesting and varied combinations. Chopped dried fruit is a good addition to biscotti, adding a slightly chewy texture as well as fruit flavor. Finally, biscotti can be coated in dark, milk, or white chocolate (see photo on p. 36).

BISCOTTI ARE GOOD ANY TIME OF DAY

For breakfast, biscotti are a pleasant change from the routine muffin or toast. They're also an excellent complement to many desserts. The nutty flavor of almond biscotti, for example, goes perfectly with a caramel custard, and raspberry sorbet gets a lift from macadamia-nut biscotti. Traditionally, biscotti are served with dessert wines such as Vin Santo or Beaumes de Venise. Biscotti can also be paired with a domestic Quady Essensia Orange Muscat or a Ficklin California Port. The bright orange-blossom and citrus overtones of Essensia go well with nuts, and the rich flavor of chocolate biscotti complements the fruity cassis flavor of the port.

It's hard to believe you'd have any, but leftover or stale biscotti can be put to use. Grind the biscotti fine in a food processor and use the crumbs for a cheesecake crust. In the summer, sprinkle biscotti crumbs over fresh peaches and berries to add a little crunch.



ALMOND BISCOTTI

For a crunchy, long-lasting biscotti, this traditional version with almonds is a good starting point from which you can make your own variations. *Makes about 3 dozen biscotti.*

7 oz. (1½ cups) whole almonds, skin on
11 oz. (2¾ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
1½ cups sugar
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. aniseed
Grated zest of 1 lemon, 1 lime, and 1 orange
3 large eggs plus 3 egg yolks
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Heat the oven to 350°F and toast the almonds on a baking sheet for 10 to 15 min., until they emit a nutty aroma but haven't turned dark brown inside. Let cool.

Put the flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, aniseed, and grated zests into the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle and combine on medium-low speed. In a separate bowl, lightly beat together the eggs, egg yolks, and vanilla extract with a whisk. With the mixer running, pour the egg mixture into the mixing bowl. When the egg mixture is almost completely incorporated, reduce the speed to low, add the almonds and mix just until the dough comes together. Do not overmix.

Dump the dough onto a lightly floured work surface, and knead in by hand any remaining dry ingredients from the bottom of the bowl. Divide the dough into three equal parts. With floured hands, roll each part into a log about 10 in. long and 2 in. in diameter. Place the logs 4 in. apart on greased or parchment-lined baking sheets.

Bake the logs at 350° for about 45 min., until they're light brown but still soft. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 300°. Let the logs cool on the baking sheet for at least 10 min. before slicing. Cut the logs on a slight diagonal into ¾-in.-thick biscotti. Place the biscotti flat on the baking sheet and dry them in the oven for 10 to 15 min., until the biscotti offer resistance when pressed, but the cut side hasn't begun to darken. Transfer the biscotti to a rack to cool. Store them at room temperature in airtight containers, or wrap them well and put them in the freezer.

You can't judge the cooking by the color. Biscotti shouldn't change color during the second baking, so poke them to tell if they're done. Press on the cake part (the nuts will burn you)—it should feel dry and offer some resistance.



Luchetti spreads melted white chocolate on the side with the fewest nuts and lets the chocolate harden on a parchment-lined baking sheet.

MACADAMIA-NUT BISCOTTI

This version, made with butter, has a lighter texture—more like a shortbread cookie. These don't stay fresh as long as the biscotti without butter, so plan to eat them within a couple of days. *Makes about 3 dozen biscotti.*

8 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
6 oz. (1⅓ cups) macadamia nuts
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
½ cup sugar
2 large eggs
½ tsp. vanilla extract

Heat the oven to 350°. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt, and set aside.

Spread the macadamia nuts on a baking sheet and toast until light brown, about 10 min. Let cool. In a food processor, coarsely grind half of the nuts with one-quarter of the dry ingredients.

Either in an electric mixer or by hand, cream the butter and the sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each addition. Add the vanilla extract and mix until incorporated. Stir in the whole nuts, the ground nuts, and the rest of the flour mixture. Mix just until the dough comes together.

Form the logs as described in the Almond Biscotti recipe

(see p. 35) and bake at 350° for about 30 min., until lightly golden but still soft. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 300°. Let the logs cool on the baking sheet for at least 10 min. before slicing. Cut the logs on a slight diagonal into ¾-in.-thick slices. Place the biscotti flat on the baking sheet and dry them in the oven for about 15 min., until the biscotti offer resistance when pressed, but the cut side hasn't begun to darken. Transfer the biscotti to a rack to cool. Store in an airtight container.

TRIPLE-CHOCOLATE BISCOTTI

Covering one side of these chocolate biscotti with white chocolate gives them an elegant look and a moister texture. *Makes about 4 dozen biscotti.*

9 oz. (1¾ cups) hazelnuts
10½ oz. (2⅔ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
3½ oz. (1 cup) Dutch-processed cocoa powder
1½ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. salt
2 cups sugar
1½ Tbs. finely ground dark-roast coffee beans or instant espresso powder
4 oz. (⅔ cup) chocolate chips
5 large eggs
1½ tsp. vanilla extract
12 oz. white chocolate

Heat the oven to 325°. Toast the hazelnuts on a baking sheet for 10 to 15 min., until they emit a nutty aroma but haven't turned dark brown inside. If they still have skins, cover the nuts with a dishtowel or paper towels for a few minutes after you take them out of the oven, and then rub the nuts with the towel to remove the skins. Set aside to cool.

Put the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, salt, sugar, and ground coffee beans into the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle. Combine these ingredients on medium-low speed and then toss in the nuts and chocolate chips. In a separate bowl, lightly whisk together the eggs and vanilla extract. With the mixer running on low speed, slowly add the egg mixture to the mixing bowl and mix until the dough comes together. Remove the bowl from the mixer and mix in any remaining dry ingredients from the bottom by hand.

Form the logs as described in the Almond Biscotti recipe (see p. 35), making four logs instead of three. Bake the logs at 325° for 30 to 35 min. until the sides are firm, the tops are cracked, and the dough inside the cracks no longer looks wet. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 300°. Let the logs cool on the baking sheet for at least 10 min. before slicing. Cut the logs on a slight diagonal into ¾-in.-thick slices. Place the biscotti flat on the baking sheet and dry them in the oven for about 25 min., until the biscotti offer resistance when pressed. Transfer the biscotti to a rack to cool.

While the biscotti are cooling, chop the white chocolate and melt it in a microwave on low power or in a double boiler over simmering water. With a knife, spread white chocolate on one cut side of each cooled biscotti. Put the biscotti, white-chocolate side down, on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Allow the chocolate to harden. Peel the biscotti from the parchment and store in an airtight container.

Emily Luchetti started her professional career as a savory cook but discovered her true passion was for baking. She is the executive pastry chef at Stars Restaurant and Stars Cafés in San Francisco and Napa, California, and the author of Stars Desserts (Harper Collins, 1993). ♦

Two Steps to Moist Pork Chops

Today's lean pork needs extra care to keep it juicy

BY CHARLES SAUNDERS



Succulent chops are a breeze when cooked in two stages. Seasoned with one of the author's spice mixes, the chops are quickly seared on the stove and then finished in the oven.

The good news is that pork has less fat in it than ever before. That's the bad news, too. Though decreased fat sounds great, the leaner pork is, the less moist it is. The cook is faced with a challenge—how to cook delicious, moist pork dishes with leaner meat.

I've found that the best way to seal the moisture into pork is to first sear the meat on top of the stove in a very hot skillet and then finish cooking it in the oven. While this process can be used for just about any cut of pork, I find it especially useful for chops. Before cooking the chops, I sprinkle on a little bit of one of the spice mixes I keep on hand, and the meal turns from simple to special.

HOW YOU CHOP IT

All pork chops come from what's considered the loin, which on a pig is anything from the shoulder down to the hip. Chops cut from near the shoulder end can be identified by a piece of the shoulder blade in them, and they're labeled blade chops. Blade chops have a lot of tough collagen in them that only softens through long cooking, so I don't think they're very good as quick-cooked chops.

Further down come the rib chops, and where the ribs end come the loin chops. The loin chops may have a little disk of the delicate, flavorful tenderloin attached, though the tenderloin is often

Today's pork is leaner and safer

We learned from our parents and grandparents that pork could kill us if it wasn't cooked thoroughly, and this was true for our parents and grandparents. Infected pork had to be well done to destroy the parasitic worms that caused trichinosis, which was spread to pigs by feeding them raw scraps from infected animals. By thoroughly sanitizing pig feed, the disease has practically been eradicated in the United States and is no longer a major health concern. Though the issue of disease has long been taken care of, old habits die hard, and we keep overcooking our pork or we simply avoid eating it.

Pork should be handled like any other meat and cooked to an internal temperature that en-

sures that any bacteria picked up in handling have been destroyed. In the case of pork chops, the Food & Drug Administration recommends that you cook them to 160°F, which is when they'll still be slightly pink, but their juices will run clear.

Public concern about the safety of pork has in fact led to the development of leaner pork. Higher-quality feed and range conditions allowing for ample exercise for the animal have been useful in lowering the levels of fat in pork meat. According to recent studies overseen by the USDA, pork is now 31% lower in fat than it was in 1983. Butchers have also responded to consumer concerns by trimming fat to a minimum. With the fat, however, goes some of the flavor and juiciness. Choose cooking methods, like my two-step method, that keep the pork moist.—C.S.



You won't find much fat in today's pork. Be sure to not overcook it or it will turn dry and tough.

removed and sold separately. Both the rib and loin chops are called center-cut chops. I think center-cut chops have the best balance of flavor, texture, and juiciness.

I like chops cut about an inch thick. Although they take longer to cook than thinner chops, they're less liable to dry out and become tough. A thin layer of fat surrounding the meat and leaving the bone in place both help to flavor the pork and to keep it from drying out during cooking.



Seasonings pep up pork. Keep a jar of the lemon, garlic, and herb Provençal Spice Mix on hand to sprinkle on pork chops.

SEASONING THE MEAT

You can season pork before, during, or after cooking, but I've found that seasoning the meat before cooking intensifies the flavors. I keep spice mixes on hand to rub on pork chops right before cooking (see sidebar at right). About ½ to 1 teaspoon of spice mix patted on each side of a chop supplies plenty of flavor without overwhelming the pork. The three combinations that are my favorites for pork are a curry-based mix, a chile and juniper berry mix, and a mix that reminds me of Provence, with rosemary, garlic, and lemon.

Pork cooked with the curry spice mixture combines well with fruits such as apples, pears, and pineapple, and grains such as basmati or arborio rice, quinoa, and couscous. The chile and juniper berry mix has a Southwestern taste, and goes well with tomatillos, peppers, tomatoes, corn, and polenta. Pork cooked with the Provençal spices is a natural to serve with ratatouille.

Though these spice mixtures are my current favorites, there are many ways to season pork chops. For a nice crust, first sear the chops and coat them with Dijon mustard and chopped fresh tarragon. Then pat a mixture of bread crumbs, finely chopped cashews, and melted butter on the chops and finish cooking them in the oven. Marinating the chops adds flavor, too. Flavored oils, fruit juice, wine, and herb vinegars are excellent for marinating all cuts of pork.

WELL COOKED, NOT WELL DONE

Center-cut pork chops don't have a lot of fat marbled throughout the meat to keep them moist during cooking, so it's important to preserve what juiciness they do have. I do this by first searing the chops in a very hot skillet to seal in the juices, and then I finish cooking them in a hot (400°F) oven. While I don't



Golden crust seals in the juices. Sear both sides of the chops to form a golden brown skin. For even juicier chops, baste with a spoonful of pan drippings before finishing in the oven.

advocate eating rare pork, too much cooking will easily rob lean pork of its juicy texture and delicate flavor.

I like to use a heavy, cast-iron skillet because it will stay hotter than a thin pan will when I add the meat. I can also put the cast-iron skillet in the oven without worrying about melting the handle. If you don't have a cast-iron skillet, use the heaviest skillet you have. If it isn't ovenproof, transfer the chops to a shallow roasting pan before putting them in the oven.

Get the skillet very hot, then add a tablespoon or so of oil. Let the oil heat until it ripples. If you're not sure the pan is hot enough, put in a morsel of meat or a piece of bread. It should start to sizzle right away.

Put in the seasoned pork chops without crowding the pan. When the meat has turned golden brown and just crusty on the bottom (after 1 to 2 minutes), flip the chops over. Use tongs or a spatula so that you don't puncture the chops and let any of the precious juices out. Sear the other side until the meat is almost the same color brown and then stick the skillet in the oven. The bottoms of the chops will continue to brown in the oven.

How long the chops take to cook in the oven depends on how thick they are, whether they were room temperature or chilled before you started, and how long you seared them on the stove. On average, thin chops ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick) take about 8 minutes to finish cooking, while thick chops (1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches) can take 10 to 12 minutes. To check if they're done, cut into one of them near the bone and press to make the juices run; the meat should still be slightly pink but not red, and the juices should run clear.

Charles Saunders is the chef/owner of Eastside Oyster Bar & Grill and SunnySide Coffee Club and Blues Bar in Sonoma, California. ♦

Three spice mixes perk up pork chops—and other foods, too

You won't run out of uses for these flavorful seasonings, so mix up large batches and keep them on hand. Stored in air-tight glass jars, these mixes will keep for weeks.—C.S.



Freshly ground spices meld their oils and aromas. A stone mortar and pestle is an effective tool for grinding juniper berries, coriander, fennel, and cumin for Southwestern spice mix, though an electric spice grinder is faster.



Long-lasting mix of flavors. A whirl in a food processor turns rosemary, garlic, black pepper, lemon zest, sage, and salt into a flavorful seasoning for pork chops. The salt helps preserve the mixture, which keeps for weeks.

CURRY & GREEN CHILE MIX

With fine bits of green chile peppers and the woody flavor of cumin seeds, each bite gives a different sensation. Besides pork chops, you can also rub this mix on duck or chicken before roasting, or try sprinkling it on grilled vegetables and serve with basmati rice tossed with pine nuts and currants. *Makes $\frac{1}{2}$ cup.*

- 1 tsp. whole cloves
- 2 Tbs. cumin seed
- 4 Tbs. curry powder
- 1 or 2 jalapeños, seeded and finely chopped
- 3 Tbs. kosher salt

Toast the cloves and cumin in a frying pan over medium heat until the cumin browns slightly and the spices release their aroma. Grind these spices coarse in a spice grinder. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and toss well.

SOUTHWESTERN SPICE MIX

If you can't find ancho chile powder or whole ancho chiles, use paprika in its place and add a pinch of cayenne pepper. Try this mix on grilled fish, with chicken or pork for fajitas and burritos, or add a pinch to polenta. *Makes $\frac{2}{3}$ cup.*

- 2 Tbs. juniper berries
- 1 Tbs. cumin seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. coriander seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. fennel seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. whole cloves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. red pepper flakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ stick cinnamon
- 3 Tbs. ancho chile powder
- 1 Tbs. Hungarian paprika
- 2 Tbs. kosher salt

Heat the juniper berries, cumin, coriander, fennel, cloves, red pepper flakes, and cinnamon stick in a dry frying pan over low to moderate heat until the spice aroma is strong and the juniper berries look oily. Remove from the heat and grind in a mortar and pestle or spice grinder until ground to medium. Toss well with the chile powder, paprika, and salt.

PROVENÇAL SPICE MIX

Don't save this mix just for pork—put it on any chop or steak bound for the frying pan or the grill. *Makes $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups.*

- Zest of 2 lemons
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup thinly sliced garlic
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup fresh rosemary leaves
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh sage leaves
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly ground black pepper

In a food processor, put in the lemon zest with the motor going, and then add the rest of the ingredients. Process briefly until the mixture is the consistency of wet sand.

Shiitakes

These meaty mushrooms are rich, chewy, and love to absorb flavor

BY JIMMY SNEED

I consider myself lucky—very lucky. When I opened my restaurant near the Chesapeake Bay, I discovered shiitake mushrooms. There are at least 25 serious shiitake farms in Virginia, and it's an elaborate hobby for hundreds of other people. Shiitake mushrooms are a natural for the area. We have plenty of oak trees (shiitakes are grown on oak logs), collecting wild mushrooms is a long-held Appalachian tradition, and there are plenty of local buyers like me who treasure the flavor of good shiitakes.

Shiitakes have been cultivated in China and Japan for 2,000 years. In Japanese, *shii* means “from a hardwood tree,” and *take* means “mushroom.” The shiitake mushroom has other common names, including *shiang-gu* (Chinese for “fragrant mushroom”), forest mushroom, oak mushroom, black mushroom, and black forest mushroom.

In its fresh form, the shiitake mushroom has a rich, buttery, meaty flavor quite unlike the flavors of other mushroom varieties, such as earthy morels, oyster-like pleurottes, or perfume-sweet enokis. When dried, the shiitake's flavors concentrate to a smoky richness. Dried shiitakes are often used in Chinese and other Asian cooking.

The shiitake's texture is also quite different from that of other mushrooms. A fresh shiitake is approximately 75% water, a considerably lower water content than that of many of its cousins. Less water is why shiitakes are firm—even chewy—and intensely flavored.

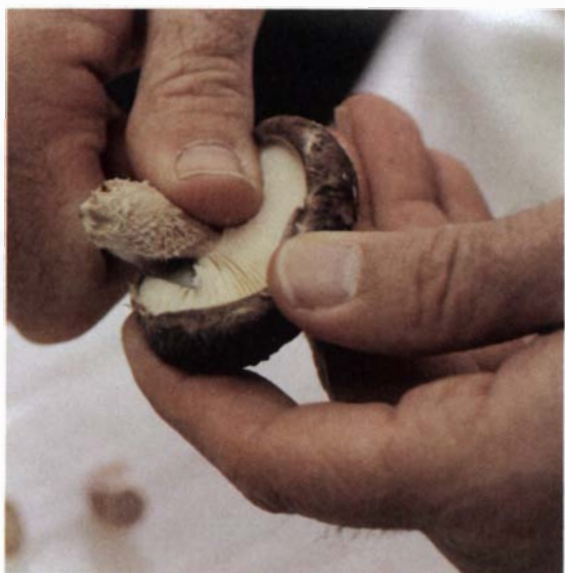
PREPARING SHIITAKES

When shopping for shiitakes, avoid those grown in a sawdust medium and opt for log-grown mushrooms. You can recognize a shiitake grown on outdoor logs: it has a dark brown cap that curves under and is nearly round. Ideally, attached to the cap's underside is a thin “veil,” through which the gills are visible. The gills should be tightly formed and moist. Sawdust-medium shiitakes have flat

Give shiitakes the treatment they deserve—high heat and good-quality cooking fat. Over heat, shiitakes don't release much water; instead, they absorb any liquids in the pan. This makes it especially important to use high-quality oil when cooking the mushrooms.



Cut off the shiitake stem where it meets the cap. Stems are too fibrous to eat, but don't throw them away. The stems can contribute their flavor to the stockpot.



tops, are drier, and generally lack the flavor of log-grown mushrooms.

Shiitakes never come in contact with dirt, so the only washing usually necessary is a gentle wipe with a damp cloth or a paper towel. If you need to store them, put the shiitakes in the refrigerator and cover them with damp paper towels. They can last for as long as two weeks, but it's best to eat shiitakes soon after harvesting. Use a knife to remove the stems where they meet the cap. The stems are too fibrous to eat on their own, but they make an excellent addition to the stockpot.

MAKE SHIITAKES SIZZLE

Unlike almost all other mushrooms, which release a lot of water while cooking, shiitakes don't give off much liquid. In fact, shiitakes absorb any liquid in the pan, so make sure you use a high-quality oil when cooking. I usually use extra-virgin olive oil, but you also could use a milder oil like peanut or grapeseed. Just pick one that won't burn at high temperatures. Butter is great for flavor, but it burns

too easily. If you use garlic or shallots in the dish, the shiitake will readily take on their flavors. Season shiitakes with freshly ground black pepper and fine-quality sea salt. I prefer sea salt because many table salts contain added iodine, which can give a chemical taste to food. Since sea salt contains natural iodine, you can season to taste without the risk of flavoring the dish with excess iodine.

Shiitakes are quite good raw, if you don't mind their chewiness. Sautéing is the most common treatment for shiitakes. One of the most important techniques for sautéing shiitakes is maintaining the sound of constant sizzling while they're in the pan, which means you're cooking them over lively heat. You want the shiitakes to develop a brown, crisp outside, which will boost their flavor. The technique requires a good heat source and the right type of pan. I use high-quality cast-iron pans. To sauté shiitakes (or any mushroom), heat the pan until it's really hot, add the oil, and wait a few seconds. When the oil is hot, add the mushrooms. With this amount of heat, the surface of the mushrooms quickly sears and they don't steam or stew in their own moisture.

SAUTEED SHIITAKE SALAD

Two easy elements—sautéed mushrooms and a simply dressed salad—combine to create an appetizer suitable for even the most elegant dinner. *Serves six.*

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

Yields 1 cup.

¼ cup aged sherry vinegar

¼ tsp. sea salt

⅛ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil

FOR THE MUSHROOMS:

1 lb. fresh shiitake mushrooms

Extra-virgin olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 shallots, diced fine

2 cloves garlic, diced fine

1 Tbs. chicken stock or water

1 oz. (2 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter

¼ cup chopped fresh chives

6 cups mixed greens

A great start to any meal. Sautéed shiitake mushrooms top a salad of mixed greens. Combining warm, chewy shiitakes and cool, delicate lettuces makes a memorable contrast.



Shiitakes add their succulence to quail stuffed with chicken mousse and sausage. Sneed gives the quail a thyme sauce made with the demi-glace he always has on hand at the restaurant, but the quail is excellent without sauce.

To make the vinaigrette, whisk together the vinegar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Whisking constantly, add the oil in a slow, steady stream until completely incorporated. (If you put the bowl on a damp towel, it will keep the bowl from spinning while you whisk.)

Shiitakes are generally very clean, so just give them a slight brushing-off with a damp cloth if they seem dusty. Cut off the stems at the base of the mushrooms' caps. (Freeze the stems to use later in a stock, if you like.) With a chef's knife, slice the mushroom caps in 1/4-in. slices.

To sauté the shiitakes, heat a heavy pan (cast iron, if possible) and add 1/4 in. of olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the mushrooms and cook for 15 seconds, stirring with a spatula or a wooden spoon. Salt and pepper to taste while they cook. Add the shallots and garlic. Continue cooking until the mushrooms are golden brown and keep stirring so the shallots and garlic don't color or burn and become bitter. Add the stock or water and then the cold butter. Swirl the pan so the melting butter emulsifies with the liquid and thickens to make a light sauce. Add the chives.

To serve, toss the greens with just enough vinaigrette to lightly gloss the leaves. (Leftover vinaigrette can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week.) Divide the greens on six plates. Spoon a portion of warm shiitakes over each bed of greens. Serve immediately.

BONELESS QUAIL STUFFED WITH SAUSAGE & SHIITAKES

If you can find lace fat (also called caul fat), which is sometimes available at butcher's shops, use it to wrap the stuffed quail before roasting. The fat helps hold the bird's compact shape and adds extra moisture and flavor. *Serves six.*

6 oz. Edward's Smoked Sausage Links, or other smoked sausage
3/4 lb. shiitake mushrooms
Extra-virgin olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 large shallots, diced fine
3 cloves garlic, diced fine
4 oz. boneless chicken breast, cut into chunks and chilled
2/3 cup heavy cream
6 boneless quail
1/2 cup chopped fresh chives
Lace fat (optional)

Cook the sausage links in a frying pan with no oil. Chop the sausage fine (a food processor works well for this). Cook the sausage again until slightly crisp. Drain on paper towels until cool.

If the shiitakes seem dusty, brush them off with a damp

Rich Cream of Shiitake Soup is easy to make. It's just a combination of sautéed shiitake purée and a cream sauce. For a less rich soup, make the cream sauce with more stock and less cream.



cloth. Cut off the stems at the base of the mushrooms' caps. (Freeze the stems to use later in a stock, if you like.) With a chef's knife, slice the mushroom caps in 1/4-in. slices. Heat a heavy pan (cast iron if possible) and add 1/4 in. of olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the mushrooms and cook for 15 seconds, stirring with a spatula or a wooden spoon. Salt and pepper to taste while they cook. Add the shallots and garlic. Continue cooking until the mushrooms are golden brown and keep stirring so the shallots and garlic don't color or burn and become bitter. Chill the shiitakes until they are room temperature or slightly cooler, about 15 min.

Purée the chicken breast in a food processor until smooth. Season with salt and pepper and slowly add the cream as you process the mixture in 4-second spurts until smooth. Scrape the bottom and sides with a rubber spatula and process another 4 seconds. Let the mousse mixture sit in the refrigerator for 15 min.

Heat the oven to 450°F. To stuff the quail, season them first with salt and pepper. Gently stir together the sausage, shiitakes, chicken mousse, and chives. Stuff the cavity of each quail as full as possible. Wrap each quail with two layers of lace fat, if you're using it. If you don't use lace fat, brush the quail with a little oil.

Roast the quail for 15 min., or until the quail skin is browned. (If you use lace fat, it will melt away.) Remove from the oven and let the quail rest in a warm place at least 10 min. before serving so the juices can redistribute.

Shiitake farming: equal amounts of wood and patience

American farmers grew 2.76 million pounds of shiitakes last year, which adds up to a lot of hard work and patience. To grow shiitakes successfully, it may take a year or more before the “spawn” begins to fruit. The “spawn” are any number of breeds of mycelium, which are the vegetative part of a fungus. (Think of mycelium as a mushroom seed.)

Farmer Art Ensley grows his shiitakes on white oak logs in King and Queen County, Virginia. He drills 20 to 30 holes in each log, puts shiitake spawn in each hole, and piles the logs. Six months to a year later, when the spawn has inoculated the logs, he soaks the logs for two hours before stacking them, log-cabin style (see photo above right) for harvesting. A log produces mushrooms for three to seven years, or until the log's nutrients are depleted. If you'd like to grow shiitakes, but think this method is a little strenuous, you might try a mail-order shiitake mushroom kit, which is available from Aux Delices des Bois (800/666-1232) and from the Oregon Territory Company (800/247-0727).

The first time I visited Art's farm, I saw 12,000 uniform logs neatly arranged in stacks of 28—and an untold number of discarded shiitake mushrooms carpeting the ground. I was stunned. There was nothing really “wrong” with these mushrooms. They were just imperfect—the caps were a little less than round, the gills weren't quite white, or the stems were too thin. This waste horrified me; after all, these shiitakes would be great for soup! But Art said, “I won't let inferior shiitakes leave my farm, just as you won't let inferior food leave your kitchen.” Can't argue with that. (Art is now my *only* supplier.)—J.S.

These log stacks produce thousands of shiitakes. Before the logs can be stacked, the wood must be drilled, inoculated with the shiitake “spawn,” and piled. It may be a year before the logs begin to fruit.



This is a perfect shiitake. The real beauties have deeply fissured curved caps and tight, veiled gills.

CREAM OF SHIITAKE SOUP

The essence of shiitakes in a bowl, this delicious soup is extremely rich. I recommend serving it in small portions as a starter. If you want to make the soup with less cream and more stock, it will still be excellent. *Serves six.*

FOR THE SHIITAKE PUREE:

1 lb. shiitake mushrooms
Extra-virgin olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 shallot, diced fine
1 clove garlic, diced fine
1½ cups homemade chicken stock or low-salt canned stock

FOR THE CREAM BASE:

1 large onion, diced
4 shallots, sliced
1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup dry white wine
2 cups homemade chicken stock or low-salt canned stock
2 cups heavy cream

For the shiitake purée—Brush off the shiitakes with a damp cloth if they seem dusty. Cut off the stems at the base of the mushrooms' caps. (Reserve the stems for use in a stock, if you like.) With a chef's knife, slice the mushroom caps in ¼-in. slices. Heat a heavy pan (cast iron if possible) and add ¼ in. of olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the mushrooms and cook for 15 seconds, stirring with a spatula or a wooden spoon. Salt and pepper to taste while they cook. After about 15 seconds, add the shallot and garlic. Keep stirring the mushrooms so the shallot and garlic don't color or burn and become bitter. After 1 minute, add the stock. Simmer until the mushrooms are tender. In batches, purée the mixture in a blender until very smooth.

For the cream base—Cook the onion and shallots with the olive oil over medium-low heat until they're clear. (This is called “sweating.”) Add the white wine and reduce by boiling until the pan is almost dry. Add the chicken stock and reduce until almost dry. Add the cream and reduce the mixture at a slow simmer for 10 min. until slightly thickened. Strain. Mix the cream base with the shiitake purée. Adjust seasoning. If the soup is too thick, add more stock.

Jimmy Sneed is the redneck at his restaurant, The Frog & the Redneck, in Richmond, Virginia. ♦

Talking Tea

If all you've known are tea-bag brews, you're in for an explosion of flavors

BY ARI WEINZWEIG

My objective here is to help you purchase, prepare, sip, and savor a truly exceptional pot of freshly brewed tea—all for just a few cents a cup. There's so much daunting liturgy and lore about tea that many people are afraid to venture past tea bags. But fine tea is a vast ocean of flavors, aromas, and experiences available to anyone willing to brave the first few moments of uncertainty. All you need are a clean kettle, cold, fresh water, a good teapot, and some great tea to put in it. With those, and with a willingness to learn, you'll be ready to navigate your way out of the mouth of the harbor and into the open tea sea.

TRUE TEA AND WHERE IT COMES FROM

My favorite legend of the origin of tea is the Eyes of Bodhidharma, an ancient tale of an Indian saint exiled in China who pledged to sit in meditation for nine years. Despite the best of intentions, he fell asleep at the meditational wheel. In anger, Bodhidharma cut off his own eyelids and threw them to the ground. From the spot where they fell grew the plant whose leaves help us keep awake and alert, the plant we now know as tea.

Regardless of its true origins, tea plants have been cultivated and the leaves harvested since the 4th century AD. Yet tea stayed an almost exclusively Asian pleasure until the end of the 16th century, when Europeans began to travel to Asia and ship tea to Europe and later to the Americas and the rest of the world. Today, it is the second most widely consumed beverage in the world, surpassed only by water.

The word tea is often misused, applied to almost any herbal infusion. There's nothing wrong with a cup of chamomile, mint, or mugwort. The French refer to these herbal infusions as *tisanes*, christening them with their own well-deserved identity. Good though they may be, such infusions are not tea. True tea is an infusion of the leaves from the tea plant, *Camellia sinensis*.

How can one plant produce so many different-tasting teas? Like the grape, one species of tea plant

To understand the mystique of tea, brew some good leaves the right way. Tea has a remarkable cultural history, but it isn't always easy to understand why, given the undistinguished nature of most tea-bag brews. All teas are not alike, so select a good-quality specimen with a style that appeals to you, and follow the steps on p. 47.

produces thousands of complex flavors. There are thousands of varieties of tea grown in the dozen or so primary tea-growing regions of Asia and Africa. China, India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia are the major tea producers, although Japan, Tanzania, Kenya, and nearly every country in southern Asia produce tea. Each growing region has its own varieties and yields its own distinctive teas. The taste of tea is determined by the altitude, the soil, the weather, the time of year the tea was picked, the care and handling of the leaves, and the method of processing.

HOW TEAS ARE MADE

The tea plant is an evergreen, requiring a relatively warm and rainy (for at least a good part of the year) climate and a certain amount of shade to keep the sun from burning the leaves. In the warmest climates, tea leaves can be harvested year-round, while in cooler regions like Darjeeling, in northeast India, the tea plant may stay dormant through the cooler winter months, storing up flavor. In the wild, a tea plant can grow more than 30 feet high, with leaves up to 12 inches long, but tea bushes grown for commercial purposes are kept pruned to about 3½ feet high.

The best teas are made from the topmost, newest pair of leaves on the end of a branch, plus the leaf bud that sits between the leaves. Within hours of picking, these leaves are processed and prepared for market. Nearly all the best teas in the world are harvested by hand. Of the many attempts to mechanize tea picking, the most common is known as the CTC (“crush, tear, and curl”) method. CTC production results in a finely cut tea leaf, which brews very quickly to great strength and significant levels of astringency. English Breakfast or Irish Breakfast teas are usually made from CTC tea, which accounts for their strong, often harsh, flavors and sturdy mouthfeel.

The three main categories of tea—green, black, and oolong—all begin the path from bush to brew the same way. Freshly picked leaves are dried in order to wither, or soften, them. They are then rolled, by hand or machine, to crush the cells,

thereby activating the leaf’s enzymes, which maximizes the flavor and character of the tea. For green tea, the leaves are then quickly steamed to prevent fermentation and protect them for storage. A cup of green tea literally tastes “green,” hinting of everything from garden herbs to freshly mown grass. Although they are little appreciated in the Western Hemisphere, green teas account for most of the world’s consumption.

To produce black teas, with which Westerners are most familiar, the fermentation process that begins with rolling is allowed to progress, darkening the leaves and developing their flavor in the process. Oolong teas, which are partially fermented, have a taste and color that lie between green and black teas. They have a lower astringency than black teas and a smokiness that results naturally from the processing. Oolongs are almost always made from the largest tea leaves, known as *souchong*.

CAFFEINE IN TEA

The little lift provided by a cup of tea has certainly always been part of its attraction. All natural teas have some caffeine. Black teas have a caffeine content of about 4% to 4½%, about one-third that of coffee. Green and oolong teas are 3% to 4% caffeine. The lift I get from tea is far more pleasurable than the lift I get from coffee. Tea’s kick is gentle and smooth, with a clarity and crispness that coffee lacks. Decaffeinated teas do exist, but as with coffee, tea tends to lose flavor and character during the decaffeination process. The best decaf teas are decaffeinated with carbon dioxide.

WHAT’S IN A TEA NAME?

To pick a great tea by name alone is nigh on impossible. For example, some delicious, fragrant teas are grown in the Darjeeling region, yet most of the Darjeeling available here has little of the magic that has made that tea famous. The best Darjeeling teas are picked from either the first growth of new leaves each spring (called the First Flush) or the second picking six weeks later (the Second Flush). A final autumn picking can also be quite good. But in be-

Like wine, tea is influenced by its surroundings.

Region, altitude, soil, and weather contribute to the quality of the final brew.

A LOOK AT SOME TEA LEAVES

Notice the large size and rolled shape of the loose teas, characteristics that promise better drinking than the powdery-textured tea from the ordinary tea bag.



Jasmine (China). A very lightly fermented tea scented with fresh jasmine petals.



Ceylon (Sri Lanka). A fermented Orange Pekoe tea.



Dragon Well (China). An unfermented—green—tea.



Formosa Oolong (Taiwan). A partially fermented tea called the “champagne of tea.”



First Flush Darjeeling (India). A fermented tea from the first picking of the season.



National-brand tea bag.

The very best teas are harvested by hand.

The pickers, like these Sri Lankans, select the topmost, newest pairs of leaves and leaf buds, which should be processed within hours of harvest to preserve their quality.

tween the Second and Autumnal Flushes comes the rainy season, when the leaves are being picked once a week and the majority of Darjeeling is harvested. Although it comes from the same plants as the exceptional First and Second Flush teas, the rainy season tea has little flavor. Sip a cup of Second Flush Darjeeling from a single estate at a high altitude next to a cup of rainy-season Darjeeling from a low altitude and you'll barely know the two had anything in common. Another frustration is that while the Darjeeling region actually produces only 22 million pounds of tea annually, over 110 million pounds of "Darjeeling" tea are sold each year. Chalk that one up to legal tea blending (Darjeeling must constitute only half the blend) and occasional unscrupulous labeling.

Survey the tea selection in your local shop and you're likely to find a confusing array of fancy trade names and blends that sound good but tell you nothing about the quality of the tea. While blending teas isn't new—or bad—my feeling is that it is all too often a case of attaching romantic names and legends to often unremarkable teas.

To add to the mystery surrounding fine tea, every tea-producing country has its own system of tea grading. While grading terms help professionals to distinguish the characteristics of one tea from another, the grades alone are not enough to identify a fine tea. Often they refer to only leaf size. "Fannings" and "dust," for example, are the smallest grades in India, and primarily go into tea bags. Indian tea grading attaches numerous initials to the better teas; "TGFOP" stands for "Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe," which indicates a fairly large leaf but is not itself a guarantee of exceptional flavor. The best indicator of tea quality is your own perception of the tea when it leaves the cup and enters your mouth.

CHOOSING A TEA

Amidst all this confusion, a new tea buyer can still find good tea. First, find a reliable source for buying consistently good teas (see a short list of suppliers at right). You may have to purchase through the mail, but shipping costs for tea aren't prohibitive. Get to know the taste and preferences of your tea merchant to see how they match up with your own. Good tea dealers should stand behind their teas. If you want a taste, ask for a sample. If you don't like what you bought, send it back. Ask questions. Ask where the tea came from—its country, region, and if possible the garden or estate that grew it. Ask if it is from this year's harvest; the fresher the better in most cases. And of course you want to know what it tastes like. To brew tea, see the sidebar at right.

Buy only as much tea as you can use within a matter of months, six at the most. While tea doesn't spoil, it does lose flavor and "sparkle." Store it in an airtight jar or tin away from light, heat, and moisture. A cool kitchen cabinet works well. Never store tea in the refrigerator—it will pick up moisture and odors.

MY FAVORITE TEAS

I confess that I like to stick with the classic, "straight" teas. If you're like me, you'll find more than enough variety there to keep your palate pleasantly entertained for a couple of lifetimes. Here are my current favorites:

Darjeeling—If I had to pick only one tea to live with, it would be a great Darjeeling. I look for single estate teas from either the First or Second Flush. This year I'm drinking First Flush from the Makai Bari Garden. It has the aroma of fresh apricots, an incredibly aromatic flavor, and a puckery feel in the mouth—the indication of astringency. Second Flush Darjeeling, picked later in the spring, is darker in flavor, deeper in body. My current cup is the Second Flush from the es-

teemed Namring Garden; it has a full, well-rounded flavor of muscat grapes and hints of mango.

Formosa Oolong—Known as the Champagne of Teas, the best Formosa (Taiwan) Oolongs are truly incredible, with the aroma of fresh peach blossoms, a deliciously delicate flavor with a wisp of smokiness, and almost no astringency at all—a great afternoon tea.

Yunnan—Little known in this country, fine Yunnan from China is one of my favorite ways to start the day. A good black Yunnan tea is full bodied, rich, and almost creamy, with a wispy smokiness and a piquant hint of pepperiness that creeps across the tongue.

Dragon Well—This is my current favorite among green teas. Known as Lung Ching in Chinese, it is named for the well outside the town of Hangzhou, the home of an especially magnanimous dragon (dragons have a long-standing relationship to tea drinking in China). Dragon Well is emerald green when brewed and has a gentle aroma and exquisite herbaceous flavor. I like it late in the day.

Wu Yi—I drink Wu Yi, the King's Tea from the Wu Yi Mountains in China, when I feel the need for a calming, comforting cup. An oolong tea, its deep, smoky, earthy flavor leaves my tongue tingling and my head clear.

Yin Hao Jasmine—If I want to drink a flavored tea, Yin Hao ("Silver Tip") Jasmine from China is the one. Some teas are flavored with artificial jasmine flavor and have a cloying taste, but Yin Hao Jasmine has a delicate aroma of jasmine flowers and a refreshing flavor. To flavor and scent the tea, fresh jasmine flowers are heaped onto lightly fermented (*pouchong*) tea leaves nightly, then removed the following morning, for seven or more nights.

SOURCES FOR TEAS

Check the Yellow Pages for your local tea merchant, or contact the following mail-order suppliers.

The Republic of Tea, PO Box 1175, Mill Valley, CA 94942; 800/354-5530.

Royal Gardens Tea Co., PO Box 1918, Fort Bragg, CA 95437; 800/462-1999.

Peet's Coffee & Tea, PO Box 8247, Emeryville, CA 94662; 800/999-2132 or 510/704-8090.

Upton Tea Imports, PO Box 159, Upton, MA 01568; 800/234-8327.

Zingerman's Delicatessen, Mail Order Department, 422 Detroit St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104; 313/663-3400.

Ari Weinzwieg wasn't born with a cup of Fancy Formosa Oolong in his hand, but he's been savoring great teas for over a decade. He is the co-owner of Zingerman's Delicatessen in Ann Arbor, Michigan. ♦

Brewing a great pot of tea

All you need for a good pot of tea are:

A TEA KETTLE, or something suitable for boiling water.

CLEAN, FRESH, COLD WATER. The water you boil for tea has a significant effect on the flavor of the tea. If you take tea leaves with you from Pittsburgh to Portland, you may find that your tea tastes completely different. Many tea drinkers use bottled water. Whether bottled or from the tap, your water should be cold and freshly drawn or poured.

A FAVORITE TEAPOT.

This is largely a matter of personal preference, but it is essential that the pot be nonporous. I love to use a glass teapot called the Wagenfeld teapot (without the infusing basket that usually comes with glass pots) so that I can see the tea in all its glory.

GREAT TEA, MEASURED AS YOU LIKE IT. There's no perfect ratio of tea to water—every tea drinker finds a preferred proportion. The British standby is one spoonful per cup, plus one for the pot, but I find that if you use fine tea (and don't load it with milk or sugar), you can use less than that. I put three level teaspoons in my pot, which holds two pints of water.

A METHOD OF REMOVING INFUSED TEA LEAVES. I like to let my tea leaves float free in the pot until the tea has been infused, then pour the tea through a strainer into the cup.

Cloth tea filters sold in specialty shops work well. I don't advocate the use of perforated metal or mesh tea balls because the tea leaves block the holes and prevent the adequate flow of water over the tea.

BREWING THE TEA

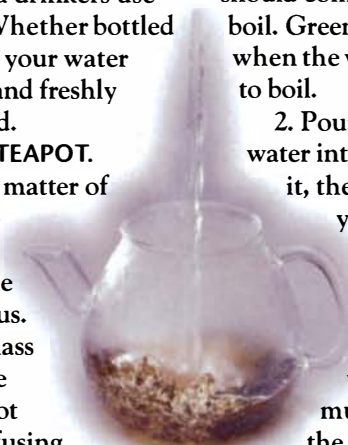
1. Bring the cold water to a boil. For black tea, the water should come to a full, rolling boil. Green teas brew best when the water is just starting to boil.

2. Pour a bit of the hot water into the pot to warm it, then pour it off. Put your tea into the pot and pour the just-boiled water over the tea. Never put the tea into the water—the water must be poured over the tea. The difference in flavor is remarkable.

3. Let the tea steep. How long is partly a matter of personal preference. Green teas and lighter black teas, like First Flush Darjeeling, are usually ready to pour after three to four minutes. Most black

teas do well with five to six minutes of steeping. If you steep the tea too long, you'll find it becomes overly astringent or "stewed" tasting.

4. Pour a cup (I like glass for cups, too). Hold it in your hand. Feel its warmth. Savor the aroma of the tea as it rises from the cup. Great tea smells as good as it tastes. In a couple of minutes, the tea is ready to drink. Sip, savor, enjoy.—A.W.



Easy, Exotic Grilling

Satays of vegetables or meat make satisfying finger food

BY RICK & ANN YODER

Satay, a Malay word meaning “skewered and grilled,” is a way of cooking that’s common throughout Southeast Asia. While on vacation in Bangkok, we looked forward to daily visits to the cart owners who sold “street food.” Our favorite was the *mu* satay—delectable morsels of pork, grilled perfectly over charcoal. The stand’s owner spoke no English, but we figured out which cut of meat she was grilling through pantomime—touching our backs, ribs, and legs, eventually landing on the shoulder. *That* was the magic cut. Just the right amount of fat marbles the meat, ensuring a tender mouthful. The warmed dipping sauce she served was a delicious combination of sweet and spice in a peanut background with chile overtones. Two small squares of sweet sticky rice accompanied each skewer of pork; with each bite of satay came a bit of rice.

The vacation ended, but our fondness for *mu* satay has become our business. We own a restaurant that features dishes from many different Asian cuisines, and the satay bar is always one of the most popular offerings. Our Seattle customers love the skewered pork, chicken, lamb, beef, shrimp, and

vegetables just as much as we did in Thailand.

Satays are simple to make. Most of the work goes into preparation: trimming to the right size for cooking, maybe marinating for flavor, and skewering for the grill. Satays also are served with a sauce, typically a peanut-based, slightly spicy one. Other intensely flavored mixtures, like a soy-based teri-



Diagonal positioning makes attractive grill marks. Start with the satays at a 45° to the grill ridges. After a few minutes, rotate the skewers 90° and continue cooking.

yaki sauce or a fruity sauce laced with chile peppers, offer a good accent to the grilled satay.

TOOLS FOR CHOPPING AND GRILLING

You need only a few tools to make satays. A Chinese cleaver is invaluable. The broad expanse of the cleaver’s side is perfect for flattening meat; the blunt edge of the blade’s “spine” can tenderize the cut. Keep your cleaver sharp, not only to make cutting easy work but also to discourage you from using too much force. If you’re pressing hard on the cleaver and it slips, you could cut yourself instead of the food. It’s best to work on a large, sturdy cutting surface.

Bamboo skewers come in several different lengths, but the 8-inch ones are easiest to use. Soak them in water for 30 to 60 minutes before skewering the food to keep the bamboo from burning on the grill. A pair of tongs helps you turn satays on the grill, and a 1-inch pastry brush is good for basting satays with marinades while they cook.

PREPARING FOR THE SKEWER

Many vegetables, as well as meat, seafood, and poultry, are suitable for satay-style grilling. Chinese or Japanese eggplant is especially good, as are yellow

Mix and match satays and sauces to make a meal full of bright flavors and textures. The vegetable satays, from left, are zucchini, eggplant, shiitake, and yellow squash; the meat satays are pork and chicken. Sauces, from left, are teriyaki, sweet-hot, and peanut.



squash, baby onions, and shiitake and button mushrooms.

Proper preparation is the most important element in creating a satay. Whatever ingredients you use, they should be in fairly small, even pieces so they cook quickly and at the same rate. Small vegetables, mushrooms for example, may be left whole, but most vegetables must be sliced to fit on a skewer. Softer vegetables like eggplant should be cut in slices of about 1 inch thick, while hard vegetables such as squash should be sliced into

pieces between $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick.

When preparing chicken and pork for satays, use skinless, boneless chicken breast and pork butt. The chicken should be trimmed of tendons and all visible fat, and the pork should be trimmed of its outer layer of fat. Both should be cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cubes.

CHOOSING A FIRE

Satays can be the center of a great informal meal. All you need is a hibachi or other small tabletop grill that allows guests to "pick a stick" and cook it for themselves. However, if you're cooking

for a crowd and using a large barbecue, one person should be in charge of cooking. (Too many cooks make it difficult to keep track of who put down which skewer, and how long each skewer has been on the grill.) When weather allows, grill outside over charcoal. In winter, you can cook satays under the broiler, in a skillet with a ridged surface, or, if you're lucky enough to have one, on an indoor grill.

Keep an eye on the fire's heat; overcooking is easy when working with small



pieces of food. To make sure the grill isn't too hot, try to hold your hand 6 to 8 inches over the grill for 3 to 5 seconds. If you can't, the grill is too hot.

While you don't want too much heat, too little won't give your satays that tasty grilled surface. Look for glowing red coals that have begun to form a layer of ash. You can make the heat more or less intense by pushing the coals together or spreading them apart. If using an electric or gas grill, let it come up to full heat for at least 10 minutes before you begin cooking. Group satays of the same type so you can monitor cooking times.

CHICKEN OR PORK SATAY

The chopped peanuts will stick together, but they should not form a paste. For pork satay, choose a shoulder cut (pork butt) with lots of visible marbling. Serves eight as an appetizer.

16 bamboo skewers, 8 in. long

FOR THE SPICE RUB:

1 Tbs. whole coriander seeds
2 tsp. whole cumin seeds
½ tsp. turmeric powder
¼ tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. salt
2 tsp. sugar
1 stalk lemongrass, white portion only, minced
10 shallots, minced
2 Tbs. roasted peanuts, chopped fine

FOR THE SATAY:

1 lb. skinless, boneless chicken breast or 1 lb. pork butt
Peanut or vegetable oil

Soak the bamboo skewers in a shallow dish of water for 30 to 60 min. Heat the grill or broiler.

Make the spice rub—In a dry pan over medium heat, roast the coriander and cumin seeds until fragrant, about 3 min.; be careful not to scorch them. Put the roasted seeds, turmeric, cinnamon, salt, and sugar in a spice grinder (or a coffee grinder that's used exclusively for spices) and grind to a fine powder. Transfer the spices to a medium mixing bowl and add the lemongrass, shallots, and peanuts. Stir the mixture.

Cut and marinate the chicken or pork—For chicken, trim the fat and tendons. With a mallet or the side of a cleaver, firmly smack the chicken breasts once to flatten slightly. To trim the pork, slice off most of the outer layer of fat. Cut the chicken or pork into ¾-in. cubes. Coat the meat with the spice rub and thread 5 or 6 pieces on each skewer. Put the skewers in a shallow dish, cover, and refrigerate 2 to 4 hours, turning occasionally.

Grill the satays—Just before grilling, use a pastry brush to lightly coat both sides of the satays with the peanut or vegetable oil to prevent sticking. Put the skewers on the heated grill, at a 45° angle to the grating. For a cross-hatch effect, rotate the skewers 90° after 2 to 3 min. and then continue cooking for 1 min. Turn the skewers and repeat the process; the second side will require a little less cooking time. Over a medium-hot fire, total cooking time for chicken should be about 5 min.; pork, 7 min. Serve with the sauce of your choice.

VEGETABLE SATAY

Direct heat will burn the sugar in the basting sauce, so brush on the basting liquid immediately after grilling each side of the vegetable skewer. Serves four as an appetizer.

16 bamboo skewers, 8 in. long

FOR THE BASTING LIQUID:

¼ cup soy sauce
2 Tbs. rice wine (preferably Chinese Shaoxing), or a good-quality dry sherry
1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh ginger
1 tsp. sesame oil
½ tsp. grated orange zest
1½ tsp. finely sliced scallions (white portion only)
1½ Tbs. brown sugar

FOR THE SATAY:

1½ lb. vegetables (choose from squash, baby onions, Japanese eggplant, mushrooms, etc.)

Soak the bamboo skewers in a shallow dish of water for 30 to 60 min. Heat the grill or broiler.

For the basting mixture—Mix all the ingredients together and stir until the sugar dissolves.

Cut and skewer the vegetables—Cut soft vegetables, such as eggplant, on the diagonal in 1-in. slices. If using regular eggplant, cut it into slices and then into half rounds or wedges. Cut harder vegetables, such as yellow squash, in half lengthwise and then slice on the diagonal into pieces ½ to ¾ in. wide. Cut baby onions in half; leave mushrooms whole. Put only one type of vegetable on each skewer and thread the skewer so the vegetable's flat surface faces the grill (see photo above).

Grill the satays—Put the skewers on the heated grill at a 45° angle to the grating. For a

Cut and skewer vegetables for even cooking. Firm vegetables are cut in small pieces, while softer ones are cut thicker. The best way to skewer vegetables? Put a slice on a flat surface and hold it in place with your palm as you drive a skewer through the center of the slice. This method ensures the vegetables' flat surfaces face the grill.

A spice "rub" marinates the pork and chicken. Cumin, turmeric, and cinnamon are moistened with minced lemongrass, shallots, and peanuts; this creates a paste rather than a liquid marinade.



crosshatch effect, rotate the skewers 90° after 2 min. and continue cooking for 30 seconds before turning the skewers over and repeating the process. Over a medium-hot fire, cook the vegetables until they're soft, which will probably take no more than 5 min. Very soft vegetables, such as mushrooms, need less. After the skewers have been turned over, brush the cooked side with the basting sauce. When the second side is done, baste it and then serve at once with the sauce of your choice.

PEANUT SAUCE

It can be difficult to find fresh galangal, a relative of ginger; however, Asian markets often stock frozen galangal. While cooking the sauce, watch the heat carefully; after the peanut butter is added, the sauce can curdle if it gets too hot. Yields 1½ cups.

2 Tbs. tamarind pulp
 ⅔ cup warm water
 4 dried red chiles
 3 Tbs. peanut oil
 3 slices galangal (the thickness of a quarter), chopped fine
 3 shallots, chopped fine
 2 cloves garlic, chopped fine
 1 stalk lemongrass (white portion only), chopped fine
 1 tsp. shrimp paste (optional)
 1 Tbs. sugar
 ½ tsp. salt
 ⅓ cup smooth peanut butter
 1¼ cups water

In a small bowl, cover the tamarind pulp with the warm water and soak until soft, about

20 min. Break the pulp with your fingers to separate seeds and strings. Pour the liquid through a fine strainer.

In another bowl, soak the chiles for 20 min. in scalding water. Drain the liquid and chop the chiles fine.

Heat the peanut oil in a wok or heavy pan until very hot. Stir-fry the chiles, galangal, shallots, garlic, lemongrass, and shrimp paste for 1 min., or until fragrant. Add the tamarind water and bring the mixture to a boil. After it has boiled for 1 min., add the sugar, salt, peanut butter, and water. Lower the heat and simmer the sauce until it thickens, about 10 min. Serve warm or at room temperature.

VARIATION: PEANUT SAUCE FOR PORK

Yields about 2 cups.

¼ fresh pineapple, peeled, cored, chopped and drained (or ⅔ cup canned crushed pineapple, drained)
 1 small fresh red chile, sliced fine
 ½ tsp. lime juice
 Pinch salt
 Pinch sugar

Peanut Sauce (see recipe at left)

In a small mixing bowl, mix together the pineapple, chile, lime juice, salt, and sugar. Put the peanut sauce into individual bowls and top with a dollop of the pineapple mixture. This sauce will only keep for a day or two.

SWEET-HOT SAUCE

Yields 2 cups.

4 cloves garlic, chopped
 2 tsp. red pepper flakes
 1 small fresh red chile, stemmed and chopped
 ½ tsp. salt
 2 Tbs. brown sugar
 1 scant cup dried apricots, loosely packed, chopped fine
 3 Tbs. rice vinegar
 ⅔ cup apricot nectar
 ½ cup pineapple juice
 ¾ cup red-plum jam or plum sauce

Put all the ingredients in a nonaluminum saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally, and then reduce heat and simmer for 12 to 20 min., stirring occasionally, until thick. Cool slightly, then purée in a food processor until almost smooth.

Serve in individual dipping bowls. Store the sauce in the refrigerator; it will keep for a week.

TERIYAKI SAUCE

Yields scant 1 cup.

½ cup soy sauce
 ¼ cup rice wine (preferably Chinese Shaoxing), or a good-quality dry sherry
 1 Tbs. peanut or vegetable oil
 1 Tbs. sugar
 1 tsp. grated fresh ginger
 1 tsp. finely chopped garlic

Combine all the ingredients, stirring to dissolve sugar. Serve in individual dipping bowls.

Rick and Ann Yoder are the founders and owners of Wild Ginger, a restaurant in Seattle that specializes in satays. ♦

Three Breads from One Simple Dough

Quickly turn flour, oil, and water into delicious Indian flatbreads

BY JESSICA SHAH

Flat, unleavened breads from western India's Gujarati cuisine are a real delight. These whole-wheat breads are brimming with flavor and nutrients. The beauty of these flatbreads is that the same basic ingredients—flour, water, and oil—can be combined in slightly different proportions to produce very distinct bread types. In a Gujarati

meal, which is vegetarian, the flatbread is accompanied by *daals* (spicy soups or stews made from dried beans and peas), vegetables, relishes such as mango pickles, and yogurt-based *raitas*. The diner tears off a small piece of bread, scoops it into the vegetables, relishes, and *daals*, and then puts the entire concoction into her mouth.

Though there are many varieties of Indian bread, I'll focus on three of my favorites:

- *chapati*—soft, and delicate, and spread with butter or *ghee* (clarified butter) for shine;
- *paratha*—triangular with a multilayered texture; and
- *poori*—deep-fried until light and puffed into a balloon shape.

Chapati flour is the best flour to use for these breads. Available from Indian or Asian grocery stores, *chapati* flour is very finely ground and sifted whole-wheat flour that's fairly low in gluten. *Chapati* flour gives the breads a delicate—and more authentic—texture, but if you can't find *chapati* flour, mix

regular whole-wheat flour with cake flour (see recipes on pp. 54–56 for proportions). All-purpose flour on its own doesn't work—it makes a dough that's too stretchy and difficult to roll.

There are three basic steps for making Indian flatbreads: making the dough, rolling the dough, and griddle-roasting or frying the bread. Rolling the dough is the only step that requires some practice; the other two steps are easy.

You need only simple tools for making flatbreads. I use a wide, shallow, stainless-steel plate called a *thali* for mixing the dough; a mixing bowl is too deep to allow easy working of the ingredients, so choose a sturdy, shallow platter, such as a pie pan. I use another authentic Indian tool, a small rolling pin with tapered ends. Its tapered shape means that I can control the direction of the pressure, and its light weight will not crush the delicate dough. You can use any rolling pin, but the smaller the better. You'll also need a nonstick griddle or skillet, a spatula, and a pair of tongs. If you're making the *chapati* on an electric stove, you'll need a wire rack that can sit directly on the burner. For the *poori*, you'll need a deep, heavy pot for deep-frying, and a skimmer for lifting the bread from the hot oil.

You can prepare the dough for all these breads up to eight hours in advance, as long as you keep it tightly covered in an airtight container so that it doesn't dry out. (Don't wrap the dough directly in plastic wrap, however, because it will stick.) In fact, the dough should be kept covered to prevent drying even while you're shaping and cooking the breads. If you have any leftover dough, you can refrigerate it for up to five days or freeze it for several weeks. To defrost frozen dough, let it thaw for about eight hours at room temperature, or defrost it in the microwave for about six minutes. Refrigerated dough is best when you let it rest at room temperature for three to four hours, but if you're in a hurry, it's all right to use it directly from the refrigera-



Authentic ingredients and tools are desirable but not necessary. You can substitute whole-wheat and cake flours for the chapati flour, and use a full-size rolling pin instead of the slender Indian ones shown here.



tor. In any case, you must knead the dough well, with greased hands, before each use.

The flatbreads will stay fresh for a day or two when stored at room temperature, but it's best to make them as close to serving time as possible. In Indian homes, they're made right before or during the meal, so they're eaten at their delicious best. To reheat the breads, just cook them for a few seconds on each side in a dry, hot frying pan or griddle.

ONE TECHNIQUE FOR ALL THREE DOUGHS

The whole process of making dough for each bread takes about five minutes. The mixing method is the same, but the doughs will vary in consistency. First, put the flour in your shallow plate. You don't need to sift the flour. If your recipe calls for oil, add the oil and mix it into the flour lightly with your fingers. You'll need a little more oil for shaping and cooking the breads. Pour in about a quarter of the amount of water called for in the recipe, and start mixing the flour and water together by moving your hand in a circular, counterclockwise motion while turning the plate clockwise. Small lumps will start to form.

Now really begin working the mixture into a dough. Gather up a handful and squeeze it. Add the remaining water a little at a time and continue to alternately gather and squeeze until the mixture forms a ball that holds together.

Grease your palms and fingers with a little oil or *ghee*. Do this frequently during the kneading process to make the ball of dough smooth and supple.

Start kneading the dough, again using a squeezing action, incorporating any dry flour or loose pieces and getting rid of wrinkles. Be sure your hands are well greased, and continue kneading a little more vigorously. Press the heel of your hand right into the dough, letting the counter support your pressure. Keep kneading until the dough is satiny and wrinkle-free.

TIPS FOR DOUGH-MAKING

- If the surface of the dough feels a little sticky and too wet, grease your hands, turn the lump of dough inside out, and knead it very gently until it's smoother.
- If the dough feels unmanageably sticky and wet, make a wide, deep depression in the center of the dough, add a few tablespoons of flour, and fold over the two sides to make a pouch. If you're using *chapati* flour, it takes a lot more flour than you would expect to firm up the dough, as much as 4 or 5 tablespoons per recipe. Continue gathering, squeezing, and kneading until all the flour is worked in and the dough is smooth.
- If the dough feels crumbly and difficult to gather,



A shallow plate makes mixing easy; a deeper mixing bowl would make it difficult to work the flour, water, and oil together. The author turns her Indian thali plate clockwise while she mixes the ingredients with a counterclockwise stroke (see above).

Gathering and squeezing are the best actions for blending the dough ingredients.

The author gathers and squeezes (above) until the dough forms a mass, and then she kneads more vigorously with greased hands.

The finished dough (at right) will be smooth and supple, with a slight sheen.

It dries out quickly, so keep it covered in an airtight container until use.





To produce a chapati that's just right, use quick strokes with the rolling pin. The bread should be round and of a uniform thickness. A dusting of rice flour keeps the soft dough from sticking during rolling.

Chapati puffs during its second roasting, which is done directly on the burner. Don't pierce the bread when you turn it with the tongs or it won't puff, and you won't get the right light consistency. When the chapati cools, it deflates.



sprinkle a little water on it, grease your hands, and gather up the loose flour.

ROLLING AND COOKING DEFINES THE STYLE OF EACH BREAD

The rolling and cooking processes give each bread a distinctive character. It's fun to see how the same ingredients result in different dough consistencies which can produce three different breads.

Rolling chapati. For *chapati*, the goal is to roll each one to a uniform thickness. Focus on getting this part right, and the perfect round shape of a good *chapati* will follow with a little more practice. A well-rolled *chapati* puffs fully or partially into a ball when roasted. But don't worry if your *chapatis* don't puff perfectly, as even veteran cooks have a few flat ones.

You need to roast each *chapati* as soon as it's rolled, so that it doesn't dry out. This is easier when two people work together. Before and during rolling, the ball of dough for each *chapati* must be

coated generously in rice flour or all-purpose flour. This prevents the soft *chapati* dough from sticking to the rolling pin or the counter. Put about a cup of rice flour on a plate, then grease your hands and knead the dough a few seconds. Pull off a lump of dough and shape it into a 1-inch-diameter ball (a larger ball would make the *chapati* too wide and awkward to work with). Dip the ball into the flour, put it on the counter, and flatten it with your palm. Start rolling the ball into a round, using quick, continuous strokes, covering the whole round in each stroke, giving a gentle push from the left without a lot of pressure. After every few strokes, dip your dough in a little more flour to prevent sticking. Rotate the *chapati* on the work surface and continue rolling. Roll the *chapati* until it's about 7 inches in diameter. If it tears, just press the dough together to seal and sprinkle a little flour on the sealed area.

continuous strokes, covering the whole round in each stroke, giving a gentle push from the left without a lot of pressure. After every few strokes, dip your dough in a little more flour to prevent sticking. Rotate the *chapati* on the work surface and continue rolling. Roll the *chapati* until it's about 7 inches in diameter. If it tears, just press the dough together to seal and sprinkle a little flour on the sealed area.

CHAPATI

Makes about 14 breads.

1 1/4 cups chapati flour (or 3/4 cup whole-wheat flour plus 1/2 cup cake flour)

1/2 cup plus 2 Tbs. water

1 cup rice flour

Roasting chapati. *Chapatis* are roasted without oil. They're first cooked on the griddle or skillet and then they're roasted directly over a gas flame or an electric burner fitted with a rack until they puff slightly. The key is to roast them for only a few seconds on each side; otherwise, they become crisp and stiff, and they won't have their characteristic soft texture.

Heat the griddle on medium high for a couple of minutes so it's nice and hot. Lift the *chapati* gently, resting it on your palms, and slap it down on the hot griddle. If it has folds or wrinkles, straighten them out with your fingers. Cook the

chapati for about 10 seconds until it's speckled with small bubbles. Flip it over with a pair of tongs, but take care not to puncture it or it will not puff. Roast the other side until it starts to puff a little and shows a few more bubbles. As you roast, the dough will become paler.

Take the griddle from the burner and increase the heat to high. If you're using an electric range, put the wire rack on the burner; this will keep the *chapati* from actually touching the element and burning. Lift the *chapati* from the griddle with tongs and put it on the rack or, with a gas stove, directly on the flame. Watch closely; as soon as the *chapati* seems to stop puffing, after about 5 to 10 seconds, turn it quickly to the other side and let it puff up a little more. It will have a few brown spots. Immediately take the *chapati* from the heat and give it a firm tap on each side to dust off the excess flour. After roasting four to five *chapati*, clean the griddle with a paper towel or cloth to remove the residue of burning flour. The final touch is about ½ teaspoon of *ghee* or regular melted butter spread evenly on one side. If you're trying to reduce your fat intake, you can omit the butter. Stack the *chapatis* on top of each other as you make them. The underside of each *chapati* gets buttered from the *chapati* below. Cool the stack, and then store it in an airtight box.

Rolling *paratha*. The dough for *paratha* is much stiffer than *chapati* dough, and it requires some pressure to roll out. The *paratha* dough is folded into layers that have been brushed with oil, which make the bread flake and puff when roasted, giving it a wonderful texture and flavor.

Grease your hands and knead the dough. Take a lump of dough and make a flattened 1½-inch ball. Put it on the counter and press it down to flatten it more with your palms. Roll the dough to about a 3-inch round. Spread ¼ teaspoon of vegetable oil evenly on the dough round, and fold it in half. Fold it one more time to make a small triangle. The oil may squeeze out a little in the folding process, but that's okay. Press the triangle to flatten it slightly. Put one corner of the triangle in front of you and roll the *paratha* out some more, moving the pin from edge to edge in quick, continuous strokes using some pressure, until it makes a rough triangle about 5 inches long. Be careful not to roll too thin, or the *paratha* will be too crisp.

Roasting *parathas*. *Parathas* are lightly roasted in oil, which enhances their flavor and helps the dough layers to puff up.

PARATHA
Makes about
12 breads.
1¼ cups *chapati*
flour (or ¾ cup whole-
wheat flour plus
½ cup cake flour)
⅓ cup plus
1 Tbs. water
1½ Tbs.
vegetable
oil



Folded dough makes flaky bread. Shah spreads the round of dough with oil and then folds it twice to make a triangle. As the bread cooks, it forms slightly puffy layers.

The shaped paratha is dense because it's folded, so press firmly with the spatula to help the heat penetrate. Don't press too long, though, or the surface of the bread will burn.

Heat the griddle on medium-high heat for a few minutes. Spread about ¼ teaspoon of vegetable oil in the center of the griddle to grease an area as big as the *paratha*. Add the *paratha* to the pan and drizzle a few drops of oil in the pan around the edges of the bread. Cook for about 30 seconds; small bubbles will appear. Flip the *paratha* with a spatula and cook another 30 seconds. The dough will become paler and develop a few brown or black spots and it may begin to puff a little.

Turn the *paratha* back to the first side, drizzle a little more oil around the edges of the bread, roast again for 20 to 30 seconds, and then repeat with the other side. Press down firmly with your spatula and hold it for four seconds. This helps the layers of overlapping dough to cook evenly. Repeat this pressing quickly over the entire surface of the *paratha*, giving only 20 to 30 seconds total; any longer and the *paratha* might burn. Repeat this pressing step on the other side, then remove the *paratha* from the



These pooris are perfect. The color is creamy brown with a few reddish spots, and the dough has puffed up nicely during deep-frying. The author drains the poori against the rim of the pot after frying.



heat. Cool the breads completely before stacking them; store them in an airtight container.

Rolling poori. Poori dough falls in between *chapati* and *paratha* dough in terms of softness, so it's easier to work with. Divide the poori dough into three big lumps. Take one lump and knead it well, as always, with greased hands. Roll the lump between your palms to make a cylinder about 1 inch in diameter and 6 inches long. Roll it until it's smooth and has no cracks. Break the cylinder into about five pieces and shape each piece into a ball. Press each ball hard between your palms until it's flat. Keep these pieces, and the two remaining lumps, covered until you're ready to roll so they don't dry out. Press the dough ball to flatten it slightly. Using quick strokes, roll it out into a round about 3 inches in diameter. If the poori dough sticks, lightly grease the rolling pin or the counter. Don't roll the poori too thin, or it won't puff properly in the hot oil. It's okay to roll about six pooris at a time. Spread out

POORI
Makes about
30 breads.
1¼ cups chapati
flour (or ¾ cup
whole-wheat flour
plus ½ cup cake
flour)
½ cup water
4 tsp.
vegetable
oil

the poori rounds on a plate (don't let them overlap or they'll stick).

Frying poori. Pooris are fun to make because they puff up dramatically when deep-fried. The perfect poori is creamy brown with a few red spots. As with any deep-frying, be very careful. Don't fill your pan more than one-third full of oil because the oil will bubble up when the breads are added. It's important to maintain a steady

high temperature for the pooris to puff up.

Heat the oil in your pot or deep-fryer to 375°F. I use a heavy-gauge Indian pot that's shaped like a small wok, called a *tava*. Add one poori to the hot oil. Let it simmer in the oil for about three seconds, and then press it gently on the spots that don't seem to be puffing up, holding it under the oil with a skimmer. As soon as it seems to stop puffing, after about eight seconds, turn it over. Fry the other side for a few more seconds. Lift it out of the oil with the skimmer and let it drain against the edge of the pot, then remove it and drain it on a rack or on paper towels. To enjoy pooris while still puffy, serve within 15 minutes; otherwise, cool and store in an airtight box.

Jessica Shah is a native of Bombay who now lives in Boulder, Colorado, where she teaches cooking classes in authentic Gujarati vegetarian cuisine. She also owns and operates a catering and take-out Indian food business. ♦



Winter Squash Makes Fall Flavors Last

Stuff, steam, and purée this good keeper

BY ODESSA PIPER

On chilly Saturday mornings in October, my co-chef Eric Rupert and I go to the farmers' market in Madison, Wisconsin, to pick up our restaurant's entire winter supply of squash. We haul off pounds of all-purpose butternut, ungainly hubbard, delicata (my favorite for stuffing), and whatever other flavorful varieties the farmers have grown. As I walk around the market, I realize how well the foods of the region harmonize in cooking. Apple cider and maple syrup, strong flavors that might otherwise be too sweet for savory dishes, work well with the richness of winter squash. Crisp hickory nuts and chewy mushrooms perfectly complement the opulent texture of firm and smooth-fleshed squash. Even hardy herbs such as sage and rosemary don't overpower squash's sturdy flavor.

Winter squash is a staple for our restaurant's seasonal cooking. To us, it's a time capsule of everything we love about harvest that we can take with us through the long winter. If you succumb, as I do, to the beauty of squash on a crisp autumn day at the farmers' market, gather with abandon, for squash will remain faithful to you long after the last tomato or eggplant has gone.

WAIT FOR THE FLAVOR TO DEVELOP

Not all varieties of winter squash are ready to eat right after the fall harvest. After being cut from the vine, winter squash require warm days to ripen in the field. Some varieties will also need to cure in storage for four to six weeks before they're at their best for eating.

Squash, along with the other members of the genus *Cucurbita*, such as cucumbers and gourds, are indigenous to the Americas, so some of the varieties of winter squash we eat are similar to those cultivated hundreds of years ago by Native Ameri-

Don't pass up winter squash when you see it in your local market.

Its sweet, firm flesh can be turned into melt-in-your-mouth dumplings, hearty soups, or delicate custards. A long keeper, squash holds onto its flavor into the winter.



Ready to eat first in the fall. From left, pumpkin, turban, acorn, and delicata all belong to the pepos species of squash and need little curing time after ripening to develop their flavor.



Two cuts are safer than one. Rest the squash on one of its trimmed ends and insert the tip of a chef's knife into the center of the squash. Lever the knife down until it's flat on the cutting board. Rotate the squash and repeat the cut on the other side.

cans. Other varieties are new hybrids, developed for their beautiful shapes and colors. As with so many other varieties of fruits and vegetables that are "improved" in the name of convenience and looks, striking or unblemished appearances do not guarantee great flavor.

The winter squash I cook with fall into three species. The first squash ready to eat in the fall belong to the *Cucurbita pepo* species. Delicata, acorn, and turban squash belong to this group, as do pumpkin, spaghetti squash, and summer squash. Pepos varieties, which are generally yellow fleshed, require little or no curing time after ripening. They're also the first to fade, however, losing their flavor and becoming fibrous after three or four months in storage.

For the classic presentation of winter squash baked in the shell with butter and brown sugar, acorn squash, with its sweet, nutty flavor, is a good choice. I like to toss in some hickory nuts or pecans to bring out the nuttiness even more. Long, cylindrical delicata squash has become my favorite variety for stuffing because each squash makes two deep bowls when cut crosswise. The delicata's creamy texture and sweet flavor, reminiscent of a sweet potato, makes it a good foil for more delicate fillings, such as custard.

I enjoy turban squash for their vibrant red, gold, and green stripes, but they can be uneven in taste and texture. Because the flesh is quite dry and firm, when I get a good turban squash, I braise it or use it for soup.

I think most pepos pumpkin varieties are over-

rated for cooking. In recipes that call for pumpkin, I prefer to combine pumpkin with delicata or butternut to boost its flavor.

The next species to ripen are the *C. maxima* squash, which can be recognized by their round stems, mostly leathery skins, and deeply colored flesh. They include hubbard, buttercup, kabocha (there are several in this group), chestnut, Red Kuri, and Green Hokkaido. These squash tend to start out starchy at harvest, but sweeten steadily during a month's cure. Maximas have a firm, fiberless flesh that turns flaky when cooked, then smooth when puréed or mashed. They usually last four months in storage without losing their flavor and texture. Of the maximas, the chestnut and Red Kuri have my vote—chestnut squash for its smooth texture upon baking and mashing, and Red Kuri for the flecks of color it adds to purées.

The last to mature and the longest to stay is the species *C. moschata*, represented by my favorite squash variety, the butternut. This squash has a deep orange flesh and, in my opinion, has the richest flavor of all the winter squash. Perhaps this is because butternut squash takes the longest to fully sweeten after harvest—up to six weeks. Butternuts will keep through a long winter if stored in a cool, dry place. A freshly cut butternut has an aroma that reminds me of watermelon. I enjoy this squash so much that I will occasionally sliver it raw into hearty salads with cabbage and winter greens.

No matter what variety you buy, look for squash that feel heavy and have a hard skin, but that have

Whether exotic or ungainly, maxima squash have firm, colorful flesh. From left, Red Kuri, kabocha, buttercup, and (in the rear) hubbard develop their sweet flavor as they cure.



no cracks or soft spots. Store squash in a cool place—a dry basement is ideal. Don't refrigerate them, though, because winter squash rapidly deteriorate at temperatures below 50°F.

CUT AND PEEL HARD SQUASH WITH CARE

Rock-hard winter squash, with their tough, leathery skin and rounded shapes, can be dangerous to cut and peel. Cutting squash requires a hefty, sharp knife and the cook's full attention. To cut squash safely and easily, cut off the woody stem and bud ends and stabilize the squash on the cutting board on one of the flat, cut surfaces. Then cut through the squash in at least two passes (see photo at left).

This method for cutting squash will not work for a large hubbard squash, which can weigh up to 20 pounds and can have an exterior as tough as its interior is sweet. For these, I take apart and open out a paper shopping bag, put it on the floor, and then hurl the squash to the floor to crack it. Once the squash is cracked, I lift it back to the work surface, insert the knife in the largest fault, and cut down through the squash.

Squash can be difficult to peel. As a rule, when baking or steaming winter squash, you should leave the skins on so that the vitamins and rich flavor concentrated close to the skin are retained. A way to get around peeling raw squash for soups is to steam it quartered with the skin still on. When the squash is soft enough, simply scrape the flesh away from the skin and proceed with the recipe. For all other cooking methods, such as

braising, you'll need to peel the squash first (see photo at right).

ROAST, STEAM, OR BOIL

When I plan to serve squash in its shell, I roast it halved and uncovered at 350°F until tender. This allows water in the squash to evaporate and concentrates the squash's inherent sweetness and nuttiness. If I'm in a hurry or I want a moister squash, I'll bake it inverted or covered. For roasting squash, I recommend basting the cut surfaces with butter to keep them soft and moist.

To make mashed or puréed squash for pies or custards, steam the squash in the skin, scrape off the pulp, and then mash the pulp or force it through a strainer to remove lumps.

Boiling squash is ideal for soups where the boiling medium will also be used as the broth. I don't recommend boiling squash except for soup, however, because flavor and vitamins leach out into the cooking water. When I want a velvety-textured soup, I cook the squash with vegetables in broth until tender, purée (a blender works better than a food processor for this), and force the purée through a fine strainer. No other thickening is necessary.

Because winter squash vary so much in size and density, it's difficult to establish exact cooking times, though it's easy to tell when they're cooked. Stab the squash with a fork—if the tines enter the flesh easily, the squash is done. With baked squash, when I detect a slight fragrance of caramel, I know it's done.



Reach for your boning knife to pare off tough skin. The knife's flexible blade hugs the curves of this hard butternut squash, quickly taking off the peel but leaving the flavorful flesh behind.

BREAD PUDDING WITH SQUASH CUSTARD

Not too sweet, this bread pudding makes a great brunch dish. Serve with whipped cream and a drizzle of maple syrup, or with ice cream. *Serves ten.*



¾ cup dried fruit (cranberries, cherries, blueberries, raisins, currants), or **1½ cups diced fresh fruit** (apple, pear)
1 to 2 tsp. brandy (optional)
1¾ lb. winter squash (butternut, pumpkin, delicata, or a mixture), cut into wedges and seeded, or **1½ cups cooked squash purée**
4 cups diced bread or cake (white bread, brioche, pound cake, or spice cake)
4 eggs
¼ cup maple syrup
1 cup milk plus 1 cup cream, or 2 cups milk
⅛ tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. vanilla extract

10 ovenproof ½-cup dishes

If you're using dried fruit, put the fruit in a saucepan and just cover it with water. Bring the water to a boil and simmer for 10 min. to plump up the fruit. Remove from the heat and strain off the water. If you wish, add the brandy and let the fruit sit at least 30 min. (It will taste even better if you let the fruit sit in the brandy overnight.)

If you're starting with uncooked squash, steam the squash until tender. Scrape the flesh away from the peel and purée the flesh in a food processor or blender. Strain through a fine sieve. You should have about 1½ cups.

Spread the cubes of bread or cake on a baking sheet and dry them in a 300°F oven for 15 to 20 min., until crispy but not brown. Divide the cubes and the dried or fresh fruit among the ten dishes.

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, maple syrup, milk, cream, squash purée, cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla extract. Pour the custard over the bread and fruit. Turn the cubes of bread a bit until they are thoroughly coated with custard. (If the bread is mixed into the custard before

Fall flavors inspire this bread pudding. Puréed squash sweetened with maple syrup and spiced with cinnamon and nutmeg forms the base of the custard. The toasted cubes of bread stay chewy because they're barely covered by the custard right before baking.

putting it in the molds, I find that the bread gets too soft and starts to disintegrate.)

Bake in a 350° oven until the custard sets, 20 to 30 min. The pudding tastes best when served warm, but not right out of the oven.

WILD-MUSHROOM CUSTARD BAKED IN DELICATA SQUASH

The cylindrical shape of delicata squash makes appealing, deep vessels. *Serves six.*

3 delicata squash (about 1¼ lb. each)

Butter

FOR THE MUSHROOM STOCK:

STOCK:

4 large shallots, chopped coarse

1 Tbs. olive oil

1 cup Madeira

3 cups water

½ oz. dried mushrooms

(porcini or shiitakes), chopped fine

2 sprigs thyme

1-in. rosemary sprig

FOR THE CUSTARD:

1 lb. fresh mushrooms (porcini, shiitakes, morels, portobellos, lion's manes, buttons)

3 eggs

½ cup cream

1 cup whole milk

⅛ tsp. salt

Pinch of freshly ground black pepper

½ tsp. minced fresh thyme

TO SERVE:

2 shallots or ½ medium onion, minced

10 cups mixed greens (spinach, arugula, kale, collards, beet greens)

In a large saucepan, sauté the shallots in the olive oil until lightly browned. Add the Madeira and reduce to a syrup over medium heat, about 15 min. Add the water, dried mushrooms, thyme, and rosemary. Simmer for an hour. You want to end up with ½ cup of strained liquid, so if it boils away too fast, add more water during the hour. Remove from the stove and pass the liquid through a fine strainer and measure it. If less than ½ cup, add water; if more than ½ cup, continue simmering to reduce.

Carefully cut the top and bottom off each squash, making sure not to cut into where the seeds start. Cut each squash in half widthwise. Scrape out the seeds with a teaspoon. Brush the squash with melted butter and bake at 350° in a covered, buttered casserole dish until soft and fully cooked, about 30 min.

Take six good-looking caps off the fresh mushrooms and sauté them whole in a little butter until they're soft. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, cream, milk, salt, pepper, thyme, and the mushroom stock reduction.

Sprinkle a little salt in each baked squash. Pour the custard mixture into the squash cups and put a sautéed mushroom cap in each one. Bake uncovered at 350° until the custard sets. After 30 min., check the custard by inserting a knife into the center of it. If runny custard immediately fills the slit made by the knife, bake for 5 to 15 min. longer. The custard is properly cooked when a little bit of runny custard runs into the knife slit after 3 to 5 seconds.



Delicata is a perfect vessel for wild-mushroom custard. Each delicata squash makes two even-sized, deep bowls, like this one. Delicata is often called the "sweet-potato" squash because of its creamy texture and sweet flavor.

Chop the remaining mushrooms into bite-size pieces and sauté them in butter with a little salt. Remove from pan. Add a bit more butter and sauté the shallots until soft. Add the greens, putting in the tougher, longer cooking greens (such as beet greens and kale) first and the tender greens (such as spinach and arugula) last. Cook until wilted and season with salt and pepper. Serve the squash still hot from oven, surrounded by the sautéed greens and mushrooms.

WINTER-SQUASH GNOCCHI WITH ROSEMARY CIDER CREAM

These hot and creamy baked dumplings, bathed in a rich, rosemary-infused cream sauce, are a great way to start a meal on a cold, autumn day. They can be made several days ahead of time (and even frozen), and then baked right before serving. *Serves six.*

1 small onion, chopped coarse
2 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 lb. butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and chopped coarse
(delicata also works well)

Turn butternut squash into golden baked dumplings. Braise the squash with apple cider, purée it, mix it with choux pastry, and then shape it into three-sided dumplings (right). Though it takes several steps to make these rich and creamy “gnocchi” bathed in Rosemary Cider Cream (below), none are difficult to do. All the preparation can be done ahead of time except the final baking.



½ cup apple cider
2 tsp. sugar
½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. pepper

FOR THE CHOUX PASTRY:

½ cup flour
½ cup water
Pinch of salt
3 Tbs. butter
2 large eggs

Rosemary Cider Cream (see recipe below)
Hickory nuts or pecans, toasted, for garnish
Rosemary sprigs, for garnish

In a large sauté pan with a cover, sweat the onions in the butter until soft. Add the squash, apple cider, sugar, and salt and pepper to taste. Simmer covered until the squash is very tender, about 30 min. If the mixture dries out before the squash is soft, add more cider. Spread out the squash mixture on a large, rimmed baking sheet. Bake uncovered at 350° for 30 min. to evaporate as much moisture as possible, stirring every 10 min. or so. Purée the squash mixture in a food processor or blender until it has the consistency of baby food. Let the squash cool to room temperature.

Make the choux pastry following the method in Basics, p. 72. With a whisk, whip the choux pastry into the squash mixture. At this point, the mixture can be stored in the refrigerator for two days.

Heat the oven to 450°. Lightly butter six ceramic baking dishes. Using two spoons, shape a heaping tablespoon of the mixture into oval quenelles (see photo at left). Arrange three quenelles on each baking dish. Bake for about 18 min., until puffed and golden brown. Pour 3 Tbs. of the Rosemary Cider Cream into each baking dish and return the dishes to the oven until the cream bubbles, about 3 min. Garnish with the toasted nuts and rosemary sprigs and serve immediately.

ROSEMARY CIDER CREAM

This sauce gets its tart flavor from apple cider that's reduced to a thick syrup. In the fall, when apple cider is plentiful, I reduce gallons of cider to keep on hand through the winter. It will keep for months in the refrigerator. This sauce is best when made the same day, but if necessary it can be made ahead and slowly reheated. *Makes 1½ cups.*

1 cup apple cider
2-in. rosemary sprig
2 cups heavy cream
Salt and pepper

Put the cider in a saucepan and bring it to a boil. Lower the heat so the cider is barely simmering and reduce the cider to ¼ cup. This will take about 30 min.

Gently tug on the leaves of the rosemary sprig to bruise the leaves so they'll release more flavor during cooking.

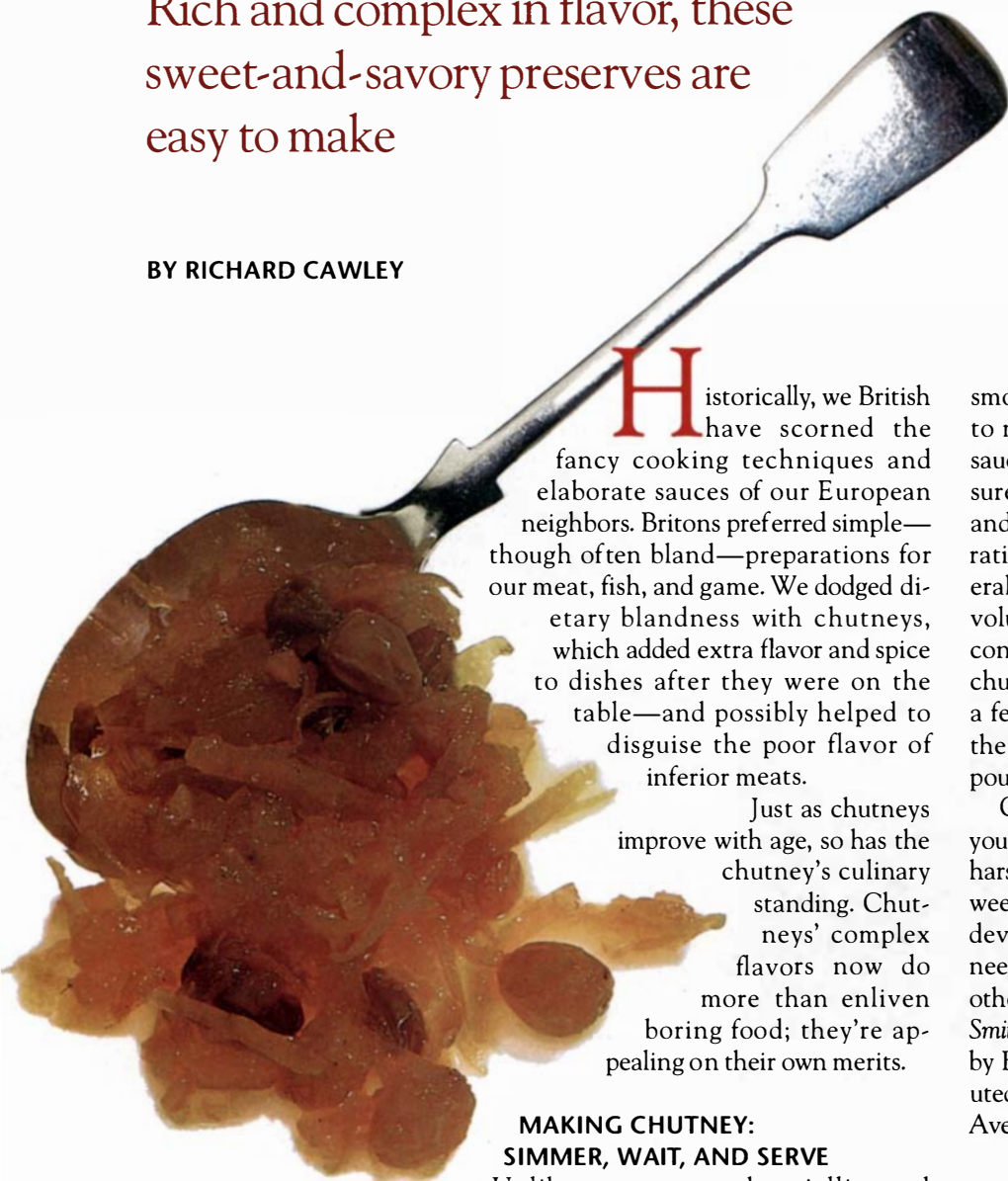
When the cider has reduced, add the cream, rosemary, salt, and pepper to taste. The acid in the cider will cause the cream to thicken. Simmer, stirring frequently, for about 45 min. until the sauce is thick, viscous, and coats a spoon. Taste and adjust seasoning. You can strain the sauce through a fine strainer to get out the dark bits of apple pulp, or leave them in if you wish.

One of Odessa Piper's early jobs, before opening L' Etoile 18 years ago, was rotating the winter squash in a root cellar on a farm. Her restaurant is right across the street from the weekly farmers' market around the capitol in Madison, Wisconsin. ♦

English Chutneys

Rich and complex in flavor, these sweet-and-savory preserves are easy to make

BY RICHARD CAWLEY



Refreshing Lemon Chutney is simple and delicious. Chutneys require only the patience for an extended simmering and a month's aging.

Historically, we British have scorned the fancy cooking techniques and elaborate sauces of our European neighbors. Britons preferred simple—though often bland—preparations for our meat, fish, and game. We dodged dietary blandness with chutneys, which added extra flavor and spice to dishes after they were on the table—and possibly helped to disguise the poor flavor of inferior meats.

Just as chutneys improve with age, so has the chutney's culinary standing. Chutneys' complex flavors now do more than enliven boring food; they're appealing on their own merits.

MAKING CHUTNEY: SIMMER, WAIT, AND SERVE

Unlike preserves such as jellies and jams, which can be temperamental in their jelling, chutneys are quite cooperative. No matter what chutney you make, success is as simple as chopping the fruits and vegetables, then slowly simmering the ingredients. There's never any fear the chutneys won't properly thicken. The long simmering means the ingredients cook down, the vinegar evaporates, the sugar caramelizes—and the chutney thickens. The vinegar leaves its tart flavor behind, but this is pleasantly counterbalanced by chutney's high sugar content. Both the sugar and vinegar also act as preservatives, giving chutneys a long shelf life.

As the chutney cooks, some of the fruit will remain intact, while the rest cooks down to a

smooth, jamlike texture. That's why it's essential to make chutney in a large, open, noncorrosive saucepan that has a heavy base. Such a pan will ensure the chutney won't burn, despite the high heat and heavy sugar content. To speed vinegar evaporation, never cover the saucepan with a lid. Generally, a chutney is ready when it has reduced in volume by about one-third. To test for the proper consistency, run a spoon across the surface of the chutney to make a channel. If the imprint stays for a few seconds without filling with liquid vinegar, the chutney is sufficiently thick and ready to be poured into jars.

Good chutney requires patience. If you sample your chutney immediately after cooking, it will taste harsh and vinegary. Chutney needs at least several weeks (preferably several months) for the flavors to develop and mellow. To give chutney the time it needs, it should be canned (see Basics, p. 72). Another good source for canning information is *Delia Smith's Complete Cookery Course*, which is published by BBC Books (ISBN 0-563-36249-9). It's distributed by Parkwest Publications, 451 Communipaw Ave., Jersey City, NJ 07304; 201/432-3257.

DARK FRUIT CHUTNEY

When matured, this chutney is rich and complex in flavor. Yields 4 pounds (about 6½ cups).

2 lb. cooking apples, peeled, cored, and chopped fine (about 5½ cups)
½ cup (4 oz.) dark brown sugar, firmly packed
½ cup molasses
2 tsp. salt
½ tsp. cayenne
2½ cups brown malt vinegar
½ lb. onions (2 medium), chopped
1½ cups (½ lb.) dark raisins

Put the apples in a large, heavy-based saucepan with the brown sugar, molasses, salt, cayenne, and 1¼ cups of the vinegar. Bring to a boil and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 15 to 25 min. or until the apples have turned to pulp.

Remove from the heat and add the onions, raisins,

Chutney makes an ordinary sandwich extraordinary. Dark Fruit Chutney (right) is also an excellent accompaniment to sausages and stews. You can make Mango Chutney (below) hot or mild, depending on whether or not you include the seeds when you add the chopped jalapeño pepper.

¼ tsp. allspice
¼ tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. nutmeg
1 cup (6 oz.) mixed dried fruit, diced (I use apricots and prunes)

Working over a bowl to capture any juice, carefully remove the peel and stone from each mango. Cut the mango flesh into ¼-in. dice and put it in the juice-capturing bowl. You should have about 3¼ cups.

Gently heat the vinegar in a large, heavy-based saucepan with the sugar and salt, stirring occasionally until the sugar and salt dissolve.

Add the jalapeño, garlic, ginger, mango flesh, reserved juices, the spices, and the dried fruit to the vinegar mixture. Bring this mixture to a boil and then turn down the heat to the lowest possible level. Simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 40 min. While the chutney is still hot, pour it into sterilized jars, cover tightly, allow to cool, and refrigerate. It will be ready to use in a month.

LEMON CHUTNEY

This chutney has the look of a pale marmalade. It's the perfect relish for hot salmon. Yields 2 to 3 pounds (about 2¾ cups).

3 large lemons (about 1 lb.), rinsed
1 large, mild onion, such as a Vidalia, chopped fine (about ¾ cup)
1 firm, crisp, sweet apple, such as a Gala, peeled, cored, and chopped fine (about 1 cup)
1-in. piece fresh, peeled ginger, grated or chopped fine (about 2 Tbs.)
¾ cup (4 oz.) golden raisins
¾ cup sugar
1 cup white-wine or cider vinegar
2 tsp. salt

Use a vegetable peeler to carefully remove all the zest from the lemons. Be careful to not include any of the bitter white pith with the zest. Cut the zest into julienne strips. Set aside.

Working over a bowl to capture any juice, use a small, thin, sharp knife to remove the white pith from the lemons. Discard the pith. Cut each lemon in half and remove and discard the seeds. Chop the lemon flesh.

Put the chopped lemon, lemon zest, any captured lemon juice, and the onion, apple, ginger, raisins, sugar, vinegar, and salt into a medium, heavy-based saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 30 min. The mixture may seem a little runny, but it will thicken as it cools.

While still hot, pour the chutney into sterilized jars, cover tightly, allow to cool, and refrigerate. It will be ready to use in a month.

Richard Cawley hails from Yorkshire, England, where he learned to cook the best of British fare. He now divides his time between London and the south of France. He is the author of seven cookbooks on English and other cuisines. ♦

and the remaining vinegar to the apple mixture. Stir well to combine.

While the chutney is still hot, pour it into sterilized jars, cover tightly, and allow to cool. Refrigerate for at least four weeks before eating.

SWEET MANGO CHUTNEY

Choose mangoes that are large, fully developed, and still firm to the touch. Yields 4 pounds (about 6 cups).

2½ lb. mangoes
1¼ cups white-wine vinegar
3 cups sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 fresh jalapeño, cored, seeded, and chopped fine
2 cloves garlic, chopped fine
1-in. piece fresh, peeled ginger, grated or chopped fine (about 2 Tbs.)



From Bay or Sea, Scallops are Sweet

A look inside the shells of these tasty mollusks

BY CHARLIE COPPOLA

At this time of year, the bay scallop boats are back in action, scooting in and out of bays and estuaries off the coast of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, hauling up bushels of scallops in their beautifully colored, radial shells. I handle a lot of fish and shellfish, supplying restaurants, retailers, and customers out of my shop in eastern Rhode Island, and I pay particular attention to delivering the most flavorful scallops available. I know I can get a dependable supply of big, meaty sea scallops year-round, while the smaller bay scallops have a limited season. Since all scallops start out tasting sweet and delicate, what a consumer really has to watch for is how they're handled once they leave the ocean bottom.

WHAT YOU'RE EATING

Like other bivalves, such as clams, oysters, and mussels, the entire scallop is edible. In Europe and Asia, you'll frequently see scallops sold live in their shells. In America, though, traditionally only one part of the scallop, the adductor muscle, is widely distributed and eaten. The adductor muscle, the round, fleshy disk that we think of as the scallop, is what opens and closes the shells. Many shellfish, including clams, have two adductor muscles—scallops have a single large one.

Fresh raw scallops (see photos at right) have a briny flavor much like oysters. Unfortunately, scallops are susceptible to contamination by bacteria and pollution like any other shellfish. While the adductor muscle isn't affected, the roe and organs are, which is why whole scallops are not widely available. Taylor Seafood of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, (508/990-0591) farm-raises Atlantic bay scallops under controlled conditions and distributes them

Each colorful shell houses a morsel of flavorful meat. Atlantic bay scallops are gathered from shallow waters, shucked, and shipped fresh around the country.



Scallops on the half shell. You don't usually see an entire scallop because only the adductor muscle is widely distributed. This whitish disk (at upper left in the photo above) opens and closes the shell. All of the scallop, however, is edible. The adductor muscle with the coral, or roe, attached (below) is one way you might see raw scallops served.





Treated with STP



Untreated (dry)

Chemical prevents moisture loss but adversely affects flavor and texture. Scallops treated with sodium tripolyphosphate (left) are white, limp, stay separate, and have no odor. More flavorful untreated scallops, called "dry" scallops (right), have an ivory-yellow color, are very firm, tend to stick together, and have a slight sulfur odor.

fresh in the shells. Ask at your fish store if they can track some down for you. Also, Asian markets often carry frozen scallops, both whole in the shell and just the meat with the crescent-shaped orange roe attached on the half shell.

THREE TYPES WIDELY AVAILABLE

Although hundreds of different species of scallops exist in our oceans worldwide, only a few of these species are harvested commercially on a large scale. The three you're most likely to find at a fish market are Atlantic sea scallops, Atlantic bay scallops, and calicos.

Sea scallops—Atlantic sea scallops are the largest of the scallops sold in the United States. The meat ranges in size from the diameter of a quarter to that of a silver dollar, with as few as five pieces per pound and as many as 35 pieces. These scallops make their home from the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Quebec to North Carolina. They're harvested in the wild by boats pulling large metal bags weighted down with a heavy metal bar along the bottom that scrape up the scallops from the ocean floor.

Sea scallops are usually shucked at sea and brought to port packed in muslin bags surrounded by ice. Some companies freeze scallops right on the boats. This can result in a superior product to fresh scallops, but more on that later. Since sea scallops are harvested year-round, you shouldn't have a problem getting them fresh at your fish store.

Bay scallops—The Atlantic bay scallop, the most succulent scallop of all, resides in shallow waters from Nova Scotia to Florida. These delicate, small scallops are not as plentiful as sea scallops, and both state and local agencies regulate the local scallop season to make sure bay scallops are not over-harvested. The season runs from fall until spring; harvesting is halted during the summer while the scallops spawn.

Bay scallops are shucked when the boats return from fishing, packed in gallon containers, and then usually shipped off fresh and untreated. They're not

always available, so if you see bay scallops, buy them—they're a real treat.

Calicos—Calico scallops live in waters off the southeastern United States. They're very small (while there's 70 to 90 shucked bay scallops per pound, it takes 150 to 200 calico scallops to make a pound). Calicos aren't as flavorful as Atlantic bay scallops, but they're generally available year-round and cost less than sea or bay scallops.

Calicos are stored live in their shell on the boat decks until the boat reaches dock, where the scallops are unloaded into processing facilities. To be competitively priced, calicos are briefly steamed to open their shells and then shucked mechanically.

WHAT HAPPENS TO SCALLOPS BETWEEN THE OCEAN AND YOUR REFRIGERATOR

Some companies flash-freeze sea scallops right on the boats. Freezing the scallops at sea or freezing them in port soon after harvesting stops bacterial breakdown in the meat. Scallops that aren't frozen right away may stay on the boat for days before being dropped off at port. Shipping them off to distributors might take another day or two. So beware—they may not be fresh at all by the time they get to you (scallops past their prime will look extremely limp). Sea scallops that are individually quick-frozen are superior to unfrozen scallops, and this is usually reflected in a higher selling price.

When sea scallops are taken out of their shells, they usually contain between 75% and 79% water. Once shucked, however, they gradually lose moisture. Many processors treat sea scallops by soaking them in sodium tripolyphosphates (STP) to replenish the water that's already dripped out and to help prevent further moisture loss. STP also retards the growth of bacteria and removes any "fishy" odor. The problem is that soaking scallops is often abused, and sea scallops are pumped with water which the consumer ends up paying for. The Food & Drug Administration has instituted a labeling

program so that any scallops with more than 79.9% water must be labeled as “water added.”

Not only are you paying for water when you buy scallops treated with STP, but you’re also getting something that doesn’t taste as good as untreated scallops. Treated scallops have none of that fresh ocean flavor that “dry” (unsoaked) scallops have; rather, they have a chemical-like flavor or no flavor at all. Soaked scallops don’t cook well, either. The trapped water flows out into the frying pan, causing the scallops to steam rather than sauté. It’s impossible to get them to caramelize. You can pick out dry scallops because they’re creamy ivory to orange in color, sticky, with a slightly sulfury smell (see photo on p. 65). STP-soaked scallops are uniformly white, they don’t clump together, and they have very little odor.

ONCE YOU GET SCALLOPS HOME

As with any seafood, I don’t recommend freezing scallops at home. Ice crystals tear cell walls and the scallops lose a great deal of water when defrosted. The one exception I would make is freezing bay scallops since they have a limited season and aren’t readily available commercially quick-frozen. If you do freeze scallops at home, spread them out in a single layer on a plate or baking sheet and put them in the freezer. Once frozen, transfer them to a plastic bag and remove as much air as possible to reduce freezer burn.

Before you cook scallops, inspect them for seaweed, bits of shell, and sand. Pick off the shells and seaweed by hand. If your scallops have any sand on them, quickly rinse them in cold water and pat them dry with a paper towel. Otherwise don’t wash scallops or they’ll absorb water. Some scallops may still have a small, white tab attached to them that becomes chewy when cooked. If the chewiness bothers you, pull them off. I usually leave them on.

Cooking scallops, or any other seafood, requires you to keep in mind one basic principle—do not overcook them. Scallops take very little time to cook. Try picking scallops of uniform size so they cook evenly. When pan-frying or sautéing, wait until the oil is very hot before putting in the scallops so that the heat sears in the natural juices. Finally, to eat them at their juiciest, serve cooked scallops immediately.

Charlie Coppola is as likely to be sending monkfish to Korea as to be dry-packing bay scallops to area restaurants. Coppola studied seafood business management, worked at Dean & DeLuca, and fished off of Long Island before becoming a partner in Manchester Seafood in Tiverton, Rhode Island.

Two great scallop dishes

BY JOHANNE KILLEEN & GEORGE GERMON

Scallops, when properly cooked, have a juicy, rich texture that’s just incredible. When overcooked, they’re like rubber. Scallops cook extremely quickly, especially the small bay scallops, so the trick is to take them off the heat just as they lose their translucence.

When you sear scallops in a skillet (as in the first recipe), keep an eye on the sides of the scallops and take them off when they begin to turn opaque. In the second recipe, the scallops are never really over the heat—they cook off the stove in the stock.



Simple elements come together in a succulent dish. Creamy, boiled new potatoes and a piquant green sauce accompany quick-seared sea scallops.

SALT-SEARED SEA SCALLOPS WITH BOILED POTATOES & GREEN SAUCE

Cooking these scallops on top of coarse salt keeps them from sticking to the skillet without having to use oil, and it leaves the scallops pleasantly salty. Be sure not to salt the potatoes to preserve the balance of flavors. You’ll have plenty of the green sauce left over—enjoy it with grilled or roasted fish, or roasted chicken. It will keep for three days. Serves two as a main course or four as a light appetizer.

6 new potatoes
2 bunches curly parsley, washed, dried, stems removed
2 cloves garlic
2 hard-boiled egg yolks
1 cup plus 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs. red-wine vinegar
¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
1 scant Tbs. kosher salt
1 lb. sea scallops, dried thoroughly on paper towels

Put the potatoes in a saucepan and add water to cover. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, and cook until tender, about 20 min.

Meanwhile, make the green sauce by combining the parsley, garlic, egg yolks, 1 cup olive oil, vinegar, and red pepper flakes in a blender or food processor. Blend until smooth. Set aside.

When the potatoes are done, drain the water and leave the potatoes in the saucepan at the side of the stove to keep them warm.

Sprinkle the kosher salt evenly over the surface of a 9-in. cast-iron skillet and heat on the stove over high heat. After about 3 min., the salt will begin to dance. Gently place the scallops on the salt, leaving space around each one. Sear until small beads of moisture appear on the top of each scallop, about 2 to 3 min. With tongs, turn the scallops over and place them on parts of the skillet where the salt has not been disturbed. Sear just until you see the sides of the scallop become opaque, about 2 min. Transfer the scallops to heated plates. Cut the potatoes in half and put them on the plates. Drizzle everything with the remaining tablespoon of olive oil. Serve immediately with a spoonful of green sauce on each plate.

SUAVE COCONUT SEAFOOD CHOWDER WITH WEST INDIAN ROUILLE

Aromatic fish stock is enriched with coconut and heavy cream to make the base of this flavorful chowder. Once the stock, or fumet, is made, the chowder comes together quickly. Serves six as a main course or eight as a first course.

6 cups fish fumet (see recipe below)
2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced ½-in. thick on the diagonal
1 medium onion, diced
1 lb. sea scallops
2 lb. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined (reserve shells)
1 cup heavy cream
2 Tbs. coconut cream (canned is fine)
½ tsp. kosher salt, or to taste
8 slices toasted country bread
West Indian Rouille (see recipe at right)

Bring the fish fumet to a boil and add the carrots and onions. Simmer gently until the vegetables are tender, 15 to 20 min. Add the scallops, shrimp, heavy cream, coconut cream, and kosher salt. Remove immediately from the heat—the scallops and shrimp will cook in the heat of the broth. Serve the chowder in heated soup bowls garnished with a slice of toasted bread topped with a dollop of rouille.

FISH FUMET

This aromatic fish stock can be made a day ahead. Use bones from nonoily fish, such as halibut, cod, or snapper, because oily fish, like salmon or trout, will give the fumet too heavy a taste. Yields 6 cups.

¼ cup olive oil
2 lb. fish heads, bones, and trimmings
Reserved shrimp shells
1 large onion, chopped coarse
2 medium carrots, cleaned and cut into 1-in. pieces
1 small fennel bulb, trimmed and chopped coarse



Scallops cook in the heat of the broth. To make sure the scallops and shrimp don't overcook and turn rubbery in the seafood chowder, they're added off the stove. Crusty bread topped with spicy West Indian Rouille completes this aromatic dish.

2 leeks, thoroughly cleaned and chopped coarse
1 sprig fresh thyme (omit if unavailable, don't substitute dried thyme)
½ tsp. black peppercorns
2 cups dry white wine
3 tomatoes, peeled, cored, and chopped coarse
1 fresh chile pepper, seeded and chopped
2 pieces orange peel, 1x2 in. each, white pith removed
6 cups water

Combine all the ingredients in a stockpot, making sure that there's enough water to cover the fish and vegetables. Bring to a boil and skim any scum that rises to the surface. Reduce the heat, and simmer for 30 min.

Pour the fumet through a strainer to remove the bones and vegetables and return the liquid to a clean stockpot. Skim off any fat. Over high heat, bring the fumet to a rolling boil and reduce by one-third. Let the fumet cool to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate until ready to use.

WEST INDIAN ROUILLE

You'll have plenty of rouille (pronounced roo-EE) left over. Try adding this spicy sauce to tuna for tuna salad, or serve it with grilled fish or chicken. Filé powder, made from sassafras leaves, is available in the spice section of supermarkets and specialty food stores. Makes almost 3 cups.

1 red bell pepper
2 egg yolks
2 slices country bread, moistened in fish fumet
3 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro
⅛ tsp. filé powder (optional)
⅛ tsp. curry powder
1 habañero or jalapeño pepper, seeded and chopped
1 cup light-flavored olive oil

Roast the red pepper in a 425°F oven until charred, 10 to 15 min. Remove the skin and seeds. Chop the pepper coarse.

In a blender or food processor, process the yolks and bread until well blended. Add the cilantro, filé powder, curry powder, red pepper, and habañero. Purée until smooth.

While the blender or processor is running, add the olive oil, drop by drop, until the rouille is thick. Then add the rest in a thin stream. Transfer the rouille to a bowl and refrigerate until ready to use. Use within two days.



Searing on salt locks in the juices without using fat. A sprinkling of coarse salt keeps the scallops from sticking to the skillet.

Johanne Killeen and George Germon, authors of *Cucina Simpatica*, look to Charlie Coppola to get fresh scallops for their restaurant, Al Forno, in Providence, Rhode Island. ♦

Turning Out a Classic *Tarte Tatin*

This upside-down caramel apple dessert is
stunning but simple to prepare

BY ANNE WILLAN

Tarte Tatin has become a legend, and like all good legends, its fame is part fact, part fantasy. The challenge of making a *tarte Tatin* (pronounced tah-TAN) is an undoubted fact—the successful tart is packed with apples that are deeply imbued with dark caramel and set on a crisply tender crust. The fantasy comes from its origins in the little railroad junction of Lamotte-Beuvron near Orléans in central France. The story goes that the Demoiselles Tatin were sisters who, left penniless when their father died, started a business baking the apple tart he had enjoyed so much. The Hotel Tatin, which they ran more than a hundred years ago, is



The apples need turning as the caramel cooks. When the undersides are deep golden brown, use a two-pronged fork (Willan's favorite kitchen tool) to flip each apple upside down. Continue cooking until the apples are thoroughly imbued with buttery caramel. The caramel bubbling around the apples should be thick and syrupy, not watery.





Prep your apples with a melon baller. After peeling, remove the stem and flower ends of the apples, cut them in half, and scoop out the seeds. The melon baller makes quick work of the task, and it leaves your apples shapely and uniform.



Resist the urge to stir until you see the sugar melt at the edges. Cooking caramel can be tricky, and Willan finds that it's best to leave the sugar and butter undisturbed at the beginning, and then only stir gently when the sugar starts to melt and caramelize.



Brace your apples against a spoon. As the apples cook, they shrink a little, so the pan must be chock full to start. You need to pack a lot of apples into tight concentric circles, so it helps to have a spoon to push against. Willan arranges her apples in caramel that's just barely warm and slightly tacky, which helps to "glue" them in place.

still across from the railroad station, and to this day you can enjoy a warm slice of their caramelized upside-down apple tart, topped with a spoonful of *crème fraîche*.

Nearer home, no unusual ingredients or equipment are needed for the perfect *tarte Tatin*. Quite literally, I've made it from Sydney to St. Petersburg in domestic kitchens with a skillet and local apples. Here's how.

PREPARING THE APPLE FILLING

First of all, find the right deep pan with a heavy base. The French make a magnificent copper pan lined with tin or stainless steel that's designed especially for *tarte Tatin*, but I've had equal success with a skillet of enameled cast iron. In a pinch, a heavy stainless-steel skillet or an unlined cast-iron skillet (see *Fine Cooking* #2, p. 52) will do. Whatever the pan, be sure the handle is heatproof and can be baked in the oven.

Select the apples. The principle technique of *tarte Tatin* is to cook apple chunks (I like to use halves) thoroughly in a buttery caramel—so thoroughly that the flavor penetrates right to the center of the apples, almost candying them. Naturally, the fruit gives off juice during cooking, which must be evaporated over high heat. A variety of apple that retains its shape when thoroughly cooked is essential. Golden Delicious has been the traditional apple of choice for many who make *tarte Tatin*. It is sweet, juicy, aromatic, and it holds its shape well in cooking. It's also readily available year-round. The next most popular apple is the Granny Smith, which lends more tartness than the Golden, but not necessarily a richer taste. For Granny Smiths with the best flavor, look for a bit of blush on the apple. Although it's a hard apple,

Granny Smith's coarse texture can sometimes cause it to turn to mush when cooked. Braeburn, a new variety from New Zealand that's rich and sweet, is a good choice for *tarte Tatin*, as are Jonathan and Jonagold. Much can depend on the season and how the apples have been stored, so if I'm in doubt, I fry a slice or two in butter to be sure they don't disintegrate.

Prepare the apples. Peel the apples with a paring knife or peeler, and then scoop out the stem and flower ends with the knife point or a melon baller (see photo above left). When I want to prepare them ahead, I rub the whole, peeled apples thoroughly with a cut lemon, put them in a bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate. I find they'll keep in the refrigerator without browning for at least 12 hours. Shortly before baking the tart, I halve the apples, scoop out the cores with the knife or a melon baller, and rub them again with lemon.

Make the caramel. The caramel is made with generous amounts of granulated sugar cooked with butter—a butterscotch, in fact. Don't be tempted to reduce the quantities of butter and sugar as you won't achieve the same richly glazed result. Melt the butter in the pan or skillet, sprinkle on the sugar, and cook the butter and sugar over medium-high heat without stirring until the sugar starts to melt at the edges (see middle photo above). Then stir with a wooden spoon, but be gentle: if you stir too vigorously or too soon, the sugar will not melt but will crystallize irreversibly into chunks. Don't worry if the butter separates and floats on top of the caramel. It will be absorbed later by the apples.

The sugar will start to color and caramelize almost at once. When this happens, lower the heat

TARTE TATIN

5 to 6 pounds (15 to 18 medium) apples, Golden Delicious or other firm variety
1 lemon, halved (optional)
4 ounces (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter
1 cup sugar
Pâte Brisée (see recipe on p. 70)



A tip for good measuring—use the rolling pin to measure the diameter of your pan, add an inch, and roll your pastry to that size.

PÂTE BRISEE

6 ounces (1½ cups) flour
2½ ounces (5 tablespoons) unsalted butter
1 egg yolk
2 tablespoons sugar
½ teaspoon salt
2 to 3 tablespoons cold water

and cook gently until the caramel is an even, deep, golden—almost mahogany—brown. If pale and undercooked, the caramel will lack taste. However, you're much more liable to have trouble with overcooking. If the caramel starts to darken and smoke, it's going too far; take the pan at once from the heat. As a precaution, I often have at hand a roasting pan of cold water. To stop cooking in a hurry, plunge the base of the caramel pan into the water, but take care not to let any water splash into the caramel, which would sputter fiercely and could cause burns.

To avoid the risk of touching the hot caramel (which reaches 340°F), take the pan off the heat and let the caramel cool in the pan for 3 to 5 minutes before adding the apples.

Arrange the apple halves in the pan by standing them upright in concentric circles. Pack them in as tightly as possible because they'll shrink during cooking. You'll find a wooden spoon helpful in propping up the first few halves as you arrange the rest of the apples (see photo on p. 69). Return the pan to the heat.

Cook the apples and caramel over quite high heat—here's where a heavy-based pan is important to prevent scorching. After a few minutes, juice will start running from the apples, so turn up the burner as high as possible to evaporate the excess liquid. The juice dissolves the caramel and the apples cook in it, absorbing the caramel deep inside their flesh. Let the apples cook until their undersides are caramelized, about 10 to 15 minutes. When the undersides of the apple halves are golden, give them a half turn with a two-pronged fork so the uncooked sides brown in the caramel, too (see photos on p. 68). Continue cooking until the apples are tender and thoroughly caramelized and the juice has evaporated: this is key, so that

Use the rolling pin to lift, carry, and drape the pastry. To keep from stretching or tearing the delicate pastry, gently roll the round of pastry around the pin, position it over your pan, and unroll it loosely over the apples. You can trim away the excess for a neat edge, or simply tuck it in, as Willan does. Remember that the dough will shrink a little during baking, so don't cut it too close.



no juice can soak the pastry when the tart is unmolded. Total cooking time for the apples depends on their firmness and can be as long as 30 to 35 minutes. While the apples are cooking, make the pastry dough and let it chill.

MAKING THE PASTRY DOUGH

The pastry for topping a *tarte Tatin* is a matter of personal choice. Chefs often opt for puff pastry because it is so rich and they always have it on hand. I prefer a sweet *pâte brisée*, which is quick to make, but you can substitute your own favorite pie pastry if you prefer. In any case, use a firm dough that isn't too sweet—the caramel contributes ample sugar to the tart.

Sift the flour onto a work surface and make a large well in the center. On another work surface, pound the butter with a rolling pin until it's soft and pliable, but not sticky or melted. Put the butter, egg yolk, sugar, salt, and 2 tablespoons of water into the well. Work these ingredients (not the flour) with the fingertips of one hand until well mixed. Draw the flour into the center with a pastry scraper or metal spatula and continue working, using the fingertips of both hands, until the mixture forms large crumbs. If the crumbs are dry, sprinkle them with another tablespoon of water.

Press the dough together; it should be soft but not sticky. Work it with the heel of your hand, pushing it away from you on the work surface, then gathering it up with the scraper, until the dough is as pliable as putty, 1 to 2 minutes. Press the dough into a ball, cover, and chill until firm, 15 to 30 minutes.

BAKING THE TART

When the apples are cooked, remove them from the heat and let them cool to tepid. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 375° (a bit higher if you're using puff pastry). Remove the pastry dough from the refrigerator and roll it into a round one inch larger than the pan or skillet (see photo above left). Loosely roll the pastry around the rolling pin, move it to the pan, and unroll it so it drapes over the edges of the pan (see photo above). If you prefer a neat finish, you



The final flip. Hold platter and pan firmly together and then carefully invert the tart. Especially when the tart is still warm, caramel can fly out during flipping, so pay attention. If you have an audience, ask them to stand back.

can trim the edge of the dough with a knife, but I don't bother. I simply tuck the edges down around the apples for a rustic effect.

Bake the tart in the heated oven for 15 to 20 minutes until the pastry is crisp and lightly browned. Remove the tart and let it cool at least 20 minutes before turning it out. Waiting is important: *tarte Tatin* is at its best when just warm, and tends to collapse if turned out when very hot. You also run the risk of being burned by hot caramel if you turn the tart out too soon.

You'll be glad to know, given the length of the recipe, that *tarte Tatin* can very well be made ahead. I often keep the baked tart eight hours, or even overnight, in the refrigerator still in its baking pan. If using an unlined cast-iron pan, however, two hours is the maximum; after that, the apples start to take on a metallic flavor. If you do make the tart ahead, warm it in a low oven shortly before serving.

Turning out the tart. For unmolding the tart, use a flat platter or tray with a rim to catch any caramel juice. The pan will be heavy and may be hot, so support it from below with the palm of one hand, using a folded dishtowel for insulation. Hold the platter on top and then flip both dishes over (see photo above). When you lift up the pan, you'll be rewarded with a stunning golden crown of interlocking apple halves, glistening and aromatic with caramel. Never mind if a bit sticks in the pan—just scoop it onto the rest of the apples and bear *La Tarte des Demoiselles Tatin* in triumph to the table.

Anne Willan is the founder and president of L'École de Cuisine La Varenne in Burgundy, France, and La Varenne at The Greenbrier in West Virginia. She's the author of dozens of cookbooks, including *La Varenne Pratique* and the new *Look & Cook* series, which has a companion television show on PBS. ♦

Crème fraîche, the classic accompaniment to *tarte Tatin*

In France, you will always be offered a bowl of *crème fraîche* as an accompaniment to *tarte Tatin*. *Crème fraîche* is unpasteurized cream that has been left to sour slightly. It's difficult to find unpasteurized cream in the United States, but it is possible to add the bacteria back into cream to make a homemade version of *crème fraîche*. Mix 2 cups pasteurized cream (avoid ultrapasteurized, if possible) with 1 cup active-culture buttermilk or yogurt and heat gently in a saucepan to 75°F. Pour the mixture into a glass container and cover loosely, leaving a gap for air. Let the cream sit at room temperature for 6 to 8 hours until it has thickened and is a bit sour (this may take less time in warm weather). Stir, cover tightly, and refrigerate. Homemade *crème fraîche* can be kept up to two weeks in the refrigerator. Serve the cold *crème fraîche* in a separate bowl to spoon over individual servings of warm *tarte Tatin*.

I find Chantilly cream (whipped cream flavored with sugar and vanilla or brandy) a bit bland, but it is an alternative to *crème fraîche*. Here in the States, I also suggest going à la mode with vanilla ice cream.—A.W.

*Sticky, buttery, caramel apples on a base of crisp pastry—a spectacularly delicious dessert from just four main ingredients and a few simple techniques. For *tarte Tatin*, the whole is definitely greater than the sum of its parts.*



In this department, experts present foundation recipes, define culinary terms, and describe basic preparation and cooking techniques. Readers are invited to send us pieces on their best methods of work.

Choux Pastry

and the paste becomes a soft, cohesive ball of dough. It's important to cook the dough enough to allow the flour particles to swell and to evaporate as much moisture as possible. The drier the dough, the more egg it will absorb and the more it will puff up during baking.

One at a time, the eggs are added to a slightly cooled dough, and the mixture is

½-inch opening. It may also be spooned into mounds for a more free-form puff.

To keep the puffs from sticking, line your baking sheets with kitchen parchment or lightly grease them. Squeeze the pastry bag evenly to ensure a smooth, uniform shape. Allow an inch of space between small shapes on the baking sheet, two inches for larger shapes.

With a wet finger or a spoon, smooth any points or rough edges of paste, which may burn before the pastries are fully cooked. Some chefs brush an egg wash, consisting of beaten egg thinned with water, over the piped shapes. However, the egg wash isn't really necessary as this dough develops a nice golden color and glaze on its own.

BAKING

In a regular oven, bake choux pastry at 375°F until crisp and golden brown all over. A wooden skewer inserted into the center should come out almost dry. This should take 25 to 30 minutes for small

This choux dough is ready to be mixed with eggs. After vigorous stirring in a hot pan to evaporate moisture, the dough forms a smooth ball with a silky sheen.

Choux pastry, or *pâte à choux* (pronounced paht ah SHOO), is a simple, fast, and versatile dough that can be used for a variety of dishes both sweet and savory. It's made from flour, water, butter, salt, eggs, and sometimes sugar.

Unsweetened, it can be spooned or piped into puffs to make elegant casings suitable for hors d'oeuvres and appetizers. You can also use it as a base for gnocchi, or add cubes of Gruyère cheese to it to make *gougère*, a crisp popover-type cheese pastry.

For sweet dishes, "cream-puff paste," as it is called in English, is piped through a pastry bag to form éclairs, cream-puff shells, and other desserts. Once cooled, choux pastry shells freeze well and are convenient to have on hand for spur-of-the-moment meals and desserts.

MAKING THE DOUGH

To make the dough, a quantity of water and butter are brought to a rapid boil, flour is added, and the mixture is cooked in the pan until all the water is absorbed

vigorously beaten to incorporate lots of air and lightness to the paste.

The ratio by volume of flour, water, and butter—1:1:½—remains constant when the recipe is multiplied.

PIPING THE DOUGH

For éclairs or cream-puff shells, the dough is piped using a plain pastry tip with a ¼- to



Tamp down the tips so they don't burn. The piped dough should be uniform in size but needn't be perfectly shaped.

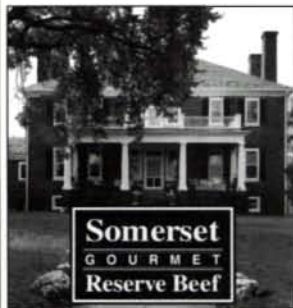


Puncture the puffs to let steam escape. These hollow shells are perfect for filling with ice cream and drizzling with chocolate.

shells, 35 to 45 minutes for larger shells. Turn the heat to low (250°) and bake an additional 10 to 15 minutes to further dry the shells without excessive browning. (For large puffs, the centers will remain somewhat soft and doughy, but they can be scooped out before you fill the shells.)

A convection oven is ideal for most pastries, including choux pastry, yielding a more uniform color and puffiness. If

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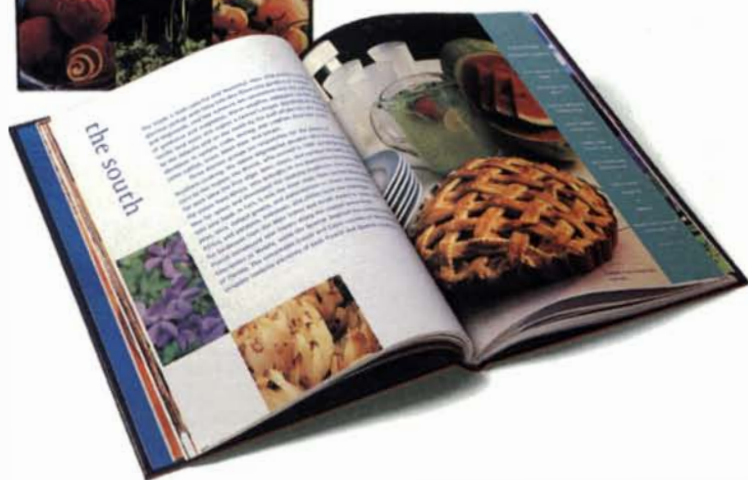
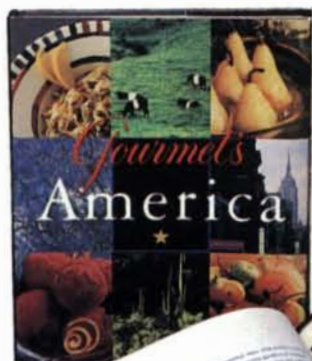


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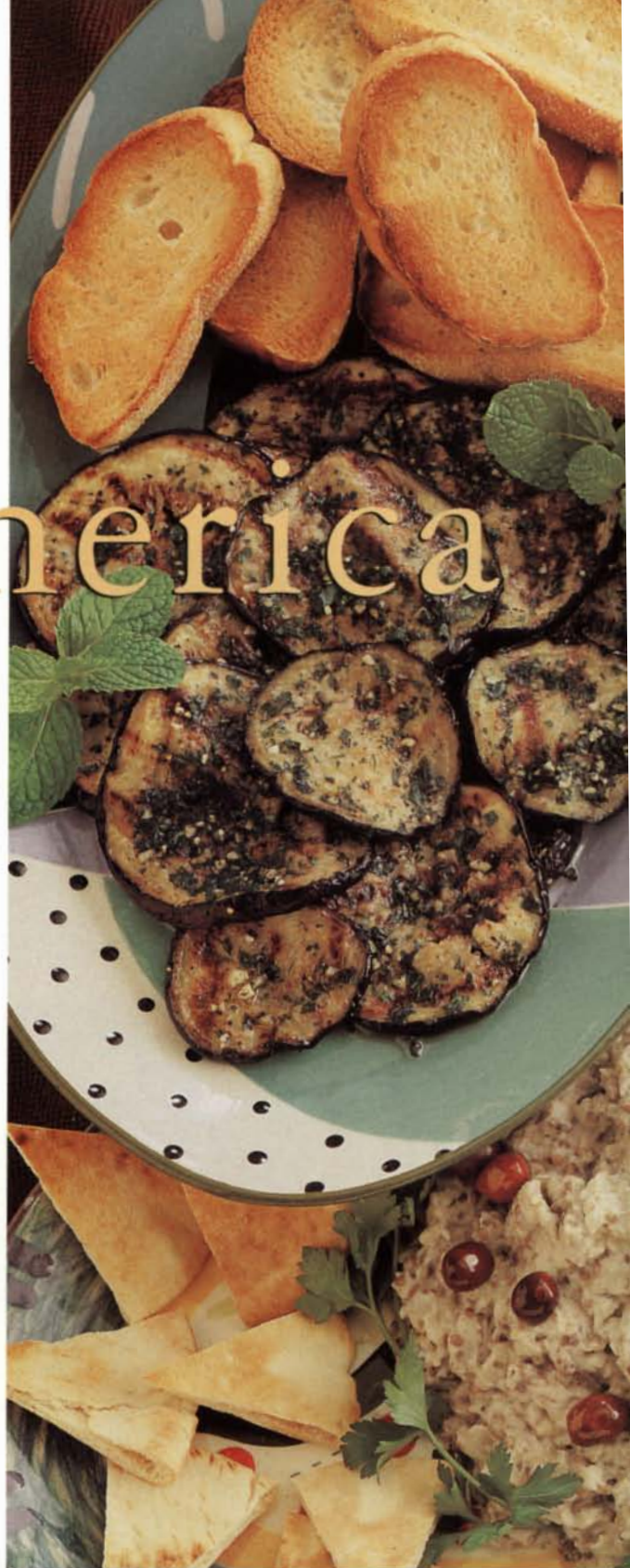


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using a convection oven, bake at 350° and check after 20 minutes. Rotate large puffs if necessary and cook an additional 10 minutes or so.

After removing the pastries from the oven, puncture them on the side or bottom with the tip of a sharp knife to allow any residual steam to escape. This will prevent sogginess. Arrange the pastries on a rack to cool. Once filled, the shells will absorb some of the moisture and aroma of the filling, becoming soft and tender if they're allowed to sit before serving.

PÂTE À CHOUX

Makes enough pastry for 10 to 15 éclair shells or 15 to 20 cream-puff shells.

½ cup (8 Tbs.) butter
1 cup water
1 cup (4 oz.) all-purpose flour
Pinch salt
2 tsp. sugar (for sweet pastries)
4 large eggs

Heat the oven to 375°F. Combine the butter and the water in a heavy, 2-qt. saucepan. Cook over medium heat until the butter has melted and the mixture comes to a boil.

Combine the flour and salt (and the sugar if you're using it). All at once, add the dry ingredients to the boiling water and butter. Turn the heat to low and stir the paste vigorously with a wooden spoon. The dough will form a cohesive ball in the center of the pan after a few strokes.

Cook the paste, flattening and turning the ball of dough against the sides of the pan, drying the paste as much as possible. This will take about 5 min. of continuous beating for the basic recipe. A film will form on the bottom of the pan; don't let it burn.

Remove the saucepan from the heat and transfer dough to a deep mixing bowl or the bowl of an electric mixer. Allow the dough to cool 3 to 4 min. before adding the eggs so that they won't "cook" when they come in contact with the dough. Beating the dough helps to speed the cooling process.

The eggs should be at room temperature. Beat them in one at a time, beating well after each addition. The dough will appear slippery at first but will become sticky and then smooth again. After all the eggs are incorporated, the dough should be stiff enough to hold a peak when a spoon is lifted out of it.

Cold choux pastry will be stiff and harder to pipe. For best results, the dough should be baked immediately after it's made (see discussion on baking beginning on p. 72). If you have more dough than you need, bake all of it and freeze the excess finished puffs. Wrap the baked shells tightly after they have cooled, and they will freeze very well.

Gay Chanler is a dessert caterer and pastry chef in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Putting Up Preserves

Putting up jars of chutneys, sweet relishes, and fruit spreads is as easy as boiling water. When preserves are to be stored in the refrigerator or the freezer, simply sterilizing the jars will safely increase their shelf life. This method is called "open-kettle canning." However, this method is not for all canning projects. It's adequate for foods with a high sugar or high acid content (or both), because sugars and acids are natural preservatives. Food high in acid or sugar that will be stored at room temperature should be canned using the "water-bath method," which involves boiling filled, sealed jars. For low-acid foods like vegetables or meats, a method known as "pressure canning" is necessary to prevent serious spoilage and even botulism (see last paragraph).

OPEN-KETTLE CANNING

When using the open-kettle method, sterilizing the jars is important because it kills bacteria that would otherwise accelerate spoilage. Not much equipment is needed to sterilize canning jars—just a large stockpot and a tong-like jar lifter. Because every jar and lid system is different, follow the manufacturer's instructions for preparing the lids.

To sterilize canning jars, use a large stockpot capable of holding either five 8-ounce canning jars (to be sealed with screw-tight lids) or three 18-ounce confiture jars (large French-style glasses that can be sealed with snap-on plastic covers). To prevent the jars from cracking, put a folded towel or a low rack in the bottom of the pot. For safety, use a jar lifter, not regular tongs, to remove them after boiling.

Before you begin, run your finger around the jar rims to check for cracks or scratches that might weaken the glass. Next, wash the jars in hot, soapy water, rinse them, and set them upright in the pot. The jars should not touch each other or the sides of the pot.

Fill the jars with hot water and then fill the stockpot to cover the jars by at least an inch. Be sure to leave space above the water level so the pot doesn't boil over. Cover the pot tightly and set it over high heat. When the water has come to a boil, reduce the heat but continue boiling for at least ten minutes. Leave the jars in the hot

water until you're ready to fill them.

To remove a jar from the pot, grip it below the rim or the threaded neck with the jar lifter. Drain the water back into the pot. The jars should still be quite hot. Set them upright on a wooden or cloth-covered surface to dry. While the jars will dry easily from their retained heat, it isn't necessary for them to be bone dry before filling. To prevent breakage due to temperature stress, you should fill the jars while they, and the preserves, are still hot.

Most recipes provide instructions for filling the jars. However, a good rule of thumb is to fill the jars to within half an inch of the top for freezer storage, or to within a quarter of an inch for either refrigerator or room-temperature storage. Wipe the rims clean with a damp paper towel and seal with lids and rings. Although the rings will loosen as the jars cool, the rings should not be tightened later as the airtight seal could be broken. Therefore, it's important to fully tighten the rings while they're still hot.

Set the jars slightly apart and out of drafts until cool. After 24 hours, check that the center of the lid is flat, indicating a good seal. Label the jars and then refrigerate or freeze them. Frozen chutneys will keep their flavor and color for six months or more. Once opened, they should be refrigerated and eaten within a few weeks for best flavor.

THE WATER-BATH METHOD

For room-temperature storage of high-sugar and high-acid foods, canning should be done in a water bath for safe storage. First sterilize the jars using the method above. Then fill the jars with the preserves and seal as previously described. With a jar lifter, return the sealed jars, upright, to the boiling water. Cover the pot and bring the water to a boil. Eight-ounce jars of fruit spreads or preserves should remain in the boiling water for ten minutes; start timing when steam emerges from the lid.

For more information on canning, including the pressure method, consult local utility-company home economists, cooperative extension agents, or booklets published by jar manufacturers. Information for ordering these books is often included with sets of canning jars.

Jeanne Lesem is the author of the prize-winning cookbook, Preserving Today. ♦

Horseradish

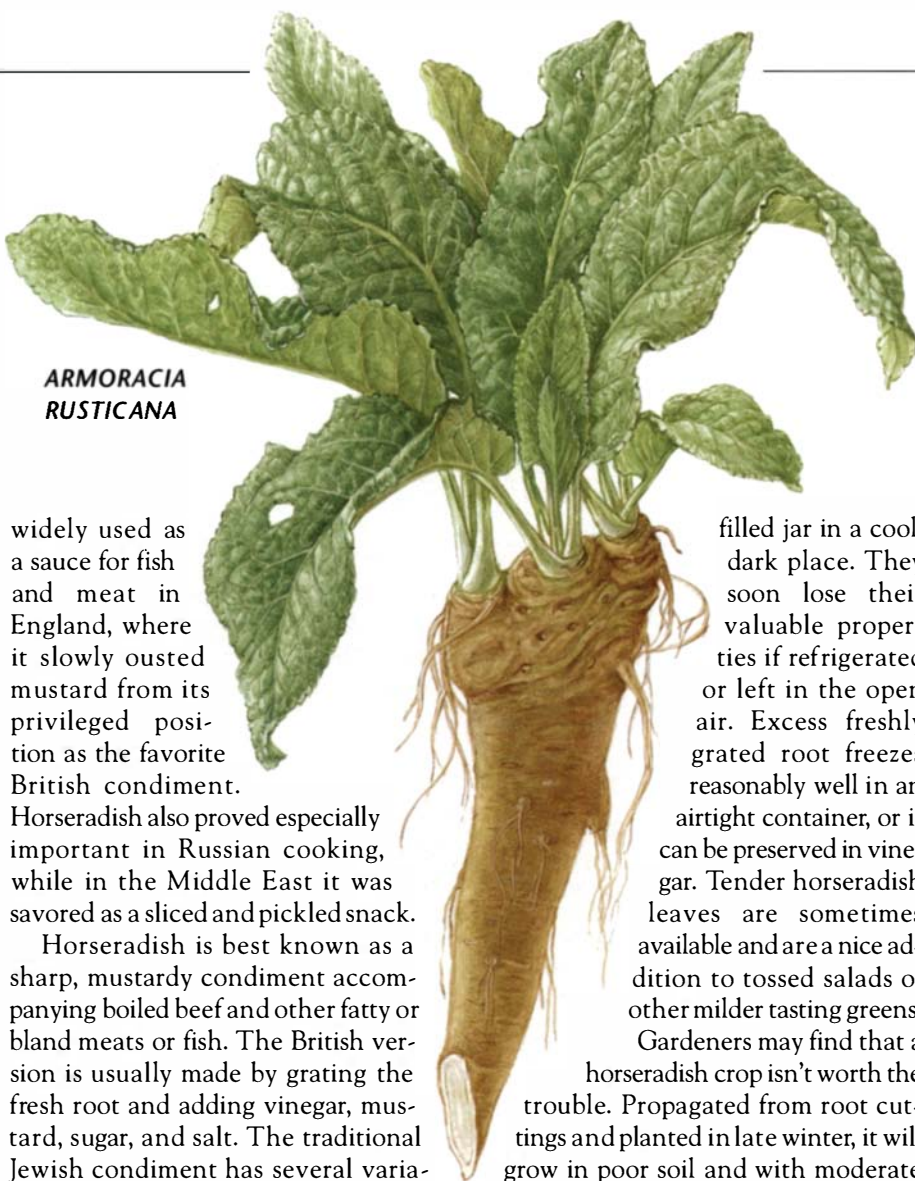
The root of the horseradish plant, *Armoracia rusticana*, packs the biggest wallop of any cultivated vegetable. Hot and pungent, it is a member of the mustard family, and like all other cruciferous vegetables (such as cabbage and broccoli), it gets its flavor from sulfur compounds. Its sharp, acrid odor is released only when the root is scraped or sliced, and is similar to that of the volatile compound found in mustard oil.

The horseradish plant is a coarse, vigorous, and hardy perennial, with large, dark, glossy leaves and tiny white flowers on stems that stand as tall as four feet. The root is cylindrical, with a rough brown exterior and a fibrous white interior.

According to Wendell Schey of the Tulelake Horseradish Company, there are approximately 3,000 acres of horseradish cultivated annually in the United States. Most is grown in Illinois, Wisconsin, and California, and is either of the “common” type, with broad, wrinkled leaves and high-quality roots, or the “Bohemian” type, with narrow, smooth leaves and somewhat inferior roots. Japanese horseradish, or *wasabi*, is an entirely different species though it’s similar to horseradish in its sinus-clearing piquancy. It’s made from the “horseradish tree,” or *Moringa oleifera*, which is native to India and the Mediterranean. The pungent pale green *wasabi* is best known as a condiment paste that’s served with sashimi and sushi.

There is some debate as to when horseradish root was deemed a culinary herb. Since antiquity, the root has been purported to have medicinal properties—it variously improved eyesight, dissolved gallstones, treated gout, and relieved stiffness. When mixed with honey and water, horseradish has been a standard remedy for hoarseness. We can be certain that horseradish leaves were eaten as early as 1250 BC, at the time of the Exodus, because it was listed as one of the five bitter herbs of the Passover seder.

A native of temperate eastern Europe, by the late Middle Ages horseradish was growing wild in northern Europe and Britain. By the 16th century, it had become a popular flavoring in Scandinavia and Germany, and was



**ARMORACIA
RUSTICANA**

widely used as a sauce for fish and meat in England, where it slowly ousted mustard from its privileged position as the favorite British condiment.

Horseradish also proved especially important in Russian cooking, while in the Middle East it was savored as a sliced and pickled snack.

Horseradish is best known as a sharp, mustardy condiment accompanying boiled beef and other fatty or bland meats or fish. The British version is usually made by grating the fresh root and adding vinegar, mustard, sugar, and salt. The traditional Jewish condiment has several variations—the simple horseradish, vinegar, and sugar version is often augmented by tart cooking apples or grated beet. In Denmark, a common dish pairs poached turbot with melted butter and horseradish, and in Germany, carp is given a sauce of horseradish, cream, ground almonds, and sugar. The French gastronome Escoffier suggested a sauce of grated horseradish mixed with bread crumbs and thick cream.

Horseradish root is available fresh, whole or grated; in dried, flaked, or powdered forms; and in commercially produced sauces and creams. Since the volatile oils dissipate rapidly after cutting or grating, or when subjected to heat, use whole, fresh roots whenever possible. Look for plump, firm, crisp roots, usually available fall through spring. Thoroughly scrub fresh roots or carefully peel away the brown skin before finely grating or food processing; discard the tough inner core. Store unused roots in a sand- or dirt-

filled jar in a cool, dark place. They soon lose their valuable properties if refrigerated or left in the open air. Excess freshly grated root freezes reasonably well in an airtight container, or it can be preserved in vinegar. Tender horseradish leaves are sometimes available and are a nice addition to tossed salads of other milder tasting greens.

Gardeners may find that a horseradish crop isn’t worth the trouble. Propagated from root cuttings and planted in late winter, it will grow in poor soil and with moderate sunshine, but needs moist soil and sun to flourish. If you do try your hand, keep the plant isolated, and when digging it up, remove all traces of root; otherwise it will take over your garden. Like a number of weeds, it can propagate itself from small bits of root left in the ground.

HORSERADISH MIGNONETTE

Horseradish makes a bracing and delicious accompaniment to briny oysters. Makes 1¼ cup.

½ cup peeled and sliced horseradish
¼ cup rice vinegar or other mild vinegar
½ tsp. grated lemon zest
½ tsp. salt
1 Tbs. sugar
½ tsp. freshly cracked black pepper
¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Blend the ingredients in a food processor. Allow the flavors to meld for 20 min. before spooning over oysters on the half shell.

Laura Reiley is a former cook and graduate of the California Culinary Academy. She is currently the restaurant editor of *WHERE* Baltimore magazine. ♦

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ALABAMA

Festival—23rd Annual National Shrimp Festival, October 6-9, Public Beach Area, Hwy. 59 South, Gulf Shores. For information, call 205/968-6901.
Festival—51st Annual National Peanut Festival & Fair, November 4-12, Houston County Farm Center, Dothan. For information, call 205/793-4323.

ARKANSAS

Festival—18th Annual Arkansas Rice Festival, October 8-9, Weiner. Rice history, cooking contest, old-fashioned rice threshing. Call 501/684-7174.

CALIFORNIA

Classes—19th Annual Great Chefs at the Robert Mondavi Winery, Oakville. October 1-3: Chef Mark Militello. November 18-21: Chef Julia Child. Long-weekend and single-day seminars, tours, tastings, and demonstrations. Call 707/226-1395, ext. 3216.
Classes—Fetzer Lifestyle Series at Valley Oaks, Hopland. Seminars and demonstrations on sustainable agriculture, low-fat and organic cooking: October 5, 8, 12, 15, 19. Winery & Picnic Tour: October 22. Wine & Food Pairing: October 27. Wine List Workshop: November 10. Cooking of the Pacific Rim with Chef Roy Yamaguchi: November 12. Call 707/744-1250.
Classes—Peter Granoff's Fall Wine Classes, Wednesday evenings, Square One Restaurant, San Francisco. Wine varietals paired with food. Call 415/788-1110.

COLORADO

Classes—Indian Vegetarian Cooking in the Gujarati Style from Western India. Contact Jessica Shah, 971 Clover Cir., Lafayette, CO 80026; 303/665-2000.

FLORIDA

Festival—18th Annual Boggy Bayou Mullet Festival, October 14-16, Niceville. Seafood festival featuring mullet fish. For information, call 904/678-1615.

HAWAII

Festival—24th Annual Kona Coffee Cultural Festival, October 30 through November 12, Kailua-Kona, Big Island. For information, call 808/326-7820.

ILLINOIS

Festival—25th Annual Burgoo Festival, October 9, Utica. Festival honoring old-fashioned pioneer stew traditionally made with game and vegetables. For information, call 815/667-4861.

LOUISIANA

Festival—21st Annual Gumbo Festival, October 7-9, Bridge City. Call Nancy Thompson at 504/341-3448.

MARYLAND

Festival—28th Annual St. Mary's County Oyster Festival, October 15-16, St. Mary's County Fairgrounds, Leonardtown. Call 301/863-5015.

MASSACHUSETTS

Festival—5th Annual Festival of Fare, November 5, Boston University. Food demonstrations by chefs, including Julia Child, Jacques Pepin, and Mary Ann Esposito. For information, call 617/353-9852.

MINNESOTA

Classes—Food Fest, October 28-30, The Kahler Hotel, Rochester. Weekend of cooking classes, seminars, and tastings. For information, call 800/533-1655.

NEW YORK

Auction—8th Annual James Beard Foundation Auction & Dinner, November 13, The Essex House, New York City. Auction of fine wines, vacations, dinner parties prepared by top chefs, cookware. For reservations and ticket information, call 212/627-2308.

NORTH CAROLINA

Festival—11th Annual Barbecue Festival, October 29, Lexington. For information, call 704/956-2952.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Festival—21st Annual Irmo Okra Strut, September 30 through October 1st, Irmo. Call 803/781-7050.

TEXAS

Festival—5th Annual Conroe Cajun Catfish Festival, October 14-16, Conroe. Call 800/324-2604.

UTAH

Classes—Food Fest, November 18-20, Olympia Park Hotel & Conference Center, Park City. Weekend of cooking classes, seminars, and tastings. For information, call 800/234-9003.

VIRGINIA

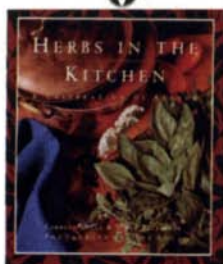
Festival—22nd Annual Oyster Festival, October 8, Maddox Family Campground, Chincoteague. All-you-can-eat menu of oyster and clam dishes and more. For information, call 804/336-6161.
Festival—37th Annual Urbanna Oyster Festival, November 4-5, Urbanna. Oyster shucking contest, Oyster Festival Parade and Fireman's Parade, tall ship tours. For information, call 804/758-0368.

WEST VIRGINIA

Festival—21st Annual Apple Butter Festival, October 8-9, Berkeley Springs. For information, call 304/258-3738.

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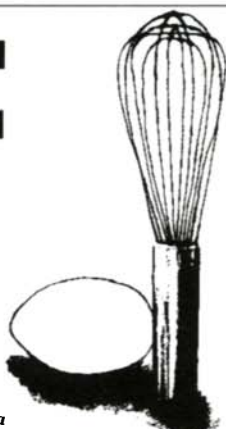
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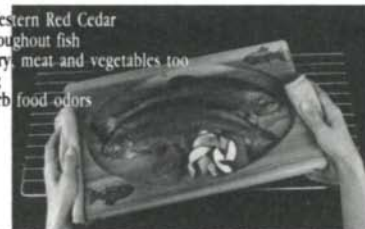
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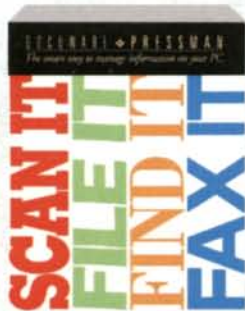
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Three-Pepper Trout

- 4 large trout fillets [about 2 pounds total]
- 1 medium sweet red pepper, cored and sliced



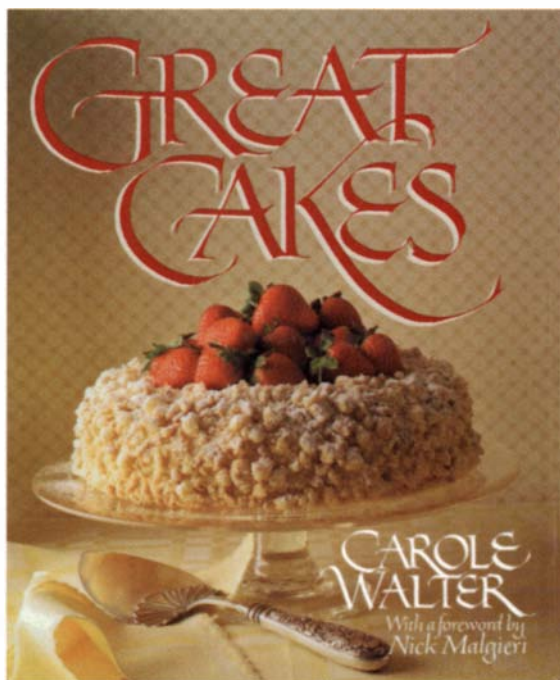
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How-to-Bake-a-Cake Books



Whether you're making a cake for a special party or for an everyday dessert, you want it to be really delicious. With all the different types, flavors, and shapes of cakes, choosing the right one for the occasion can be confusing. And because baking is as much chemistry as it is art, it's valuable to have a thorough technical understanding of the recipe before you begin to sift your flour. The following books offer a wide variety of delicious recipes along with a generous sprinkling of techniques that will make your time in the kitchen well spent and your cake-baking experience very rewarding.

***Great Cakes*, by Carole Walter.** BALLANTINE BOOKS, 1991. \$25, HARDCOVER; 558 PP. ISBN 0-345-33751-4.

Written by a baking teacher, this book offers a wealth of practical information on baking cakes from scratch in a home kitchen. Winner of the 1992 James Beard Book Award for Best Baking and Dessert Book, *Great Cakes* is a complete course on cake baking, from quick and easy pound cakes through elaborate showstopper European-style cakes.

Introductory sections on "The Twelve Most Common Mistakes Made in Cake Baking" and "Trouble Shooting," address problems that may arise when baking, and offer explanations of why these problems occur. A detailed chapter on ingredients describes each item and its role in cake baking and provides practical information on choosing brands and how to store the ingredients. A similar chapter addresses equipment and lets you know which items, from the many available for sale, are really necessary and useful for cake baking.

Procedures and techniques are also covered in the introductory sections of the book, leaving no questions as to how to measure ingredients, handle chocolate, mix and fold batters, prepare pans for baking, determine which temperature for which type of cake, tell when a cake is done, release a cake from a pan, and store cakes. Another section deals with baking at high altitudes and how to make adjustments in the recipes.

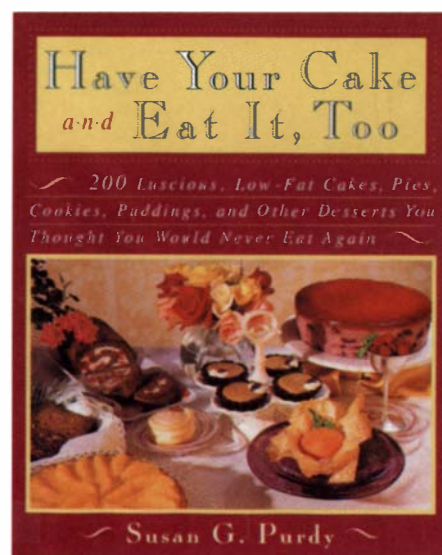
Each recipe chapter begins with a description of the type of cake that is covered in that chapter, such as "Chiffon Cakes," "Upside-Down Cakes," "European Tortes and Gâteaux," and "Passover Sponge Cakes and Tortes." These chapter openers are followed by a section that offers tips, like how to add flavors, what method of mixing to use, and what to look for in the batter. Two hundred fifty recipes are contained in the book's seventeen chapters, with an extensive section called "Sweet Endings" that has many recipes for fillings, frostings, glazes, syrups, sauces, and toppings. A chapter on "Finishing Touches" gives a host of tips on decorating the cakes.

The recipes are very well written in a clear, easy-to-understand style. Each has a side box called "At a Glance," that gives the number of servings, the pan size, the method of pan preparation, the oven temperature, the level of the oven rack, the baking time, and the mixing method.

There is an eight-page insert of color photographs in the center of the book, which gives a clear idea of what to expect when baking these cakes. Also offered are extensive appendices with charts on ingredient equivalents and substitutions, metric equivalents by weight and by fluid measure, a glossary, and mail-order sources. With this type of information at your fingertips, it will be hard to go wrong when baking from *Great Cakes*. It is a comprehensive book that both novice and professional bakers will find invaluable.

***Have Your Cake and Eat It, Too: 200 Luscious, Low-Fat Cakes, Pies, Cookies, Puddings, and Other Desserts You Thought You Would Never Eat Again*, by Susan G. Purdy.** WILLIAM MORROW, 1993. \$25, HARDCOVER; 474 PP. ISBN 0-688-11110-6.

Winner of the 1994 IACP/Julia Child Cookbook Award for Best Health and Special Diet Book, *Have Your Cake and Eat It, Too* is the newest entry in the low-fat baking field. The recipes in this book minimize fat and cholesterol yet maximize flavor, which isn't easy to accomplish



in low-fat baking. Veteran cookbook author Susan G. Purdy has done an extremely thorough job of researching the subject of low-fat baking. (Continued on p. 83)

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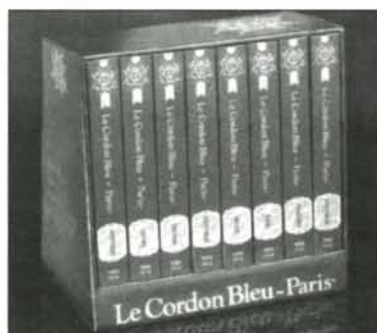


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Equipped with this knowledge, she created new, truly innovative desserts based on the classics. In easy-to-understand terms, she explains the chemistry of fat and its role in health and nutrition. She also clearly presents guidelines for interpreting the nutritional analyses that are listed for each recipe—calories and amounts of protein, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrates, sodium, and cholesterol in each portion of a dessert.

A chapter on ingredients gives detailed information on each ingredient and its role in baking. Scattered throughout the chapter are several handy charts that compare calories and fat percentages of many items, such as yogurt, sour cream, whole and low-fat milk, chocolate, and cocoa powder. Another chapter on equipment explains in depth each item that is used and includes a chart on pan volume and serving that's very useful for figuring which pans can be substituted for each other.

The chapters cover other desserts as well as cakes, ranging from uncomplicated breakfast and brunch dishes such as pancakes and scones through cakes, cheesecakes, puddings, pies, cookies, and elegant desserts like soufflés. Purdy has categorized the recipes in a chart at the front of the book called "Recipes for Special Diets." The grouping includes Totally Fat-Free Recipes (less than 1% calories from fat), Cholesterol-Free Recipes, Egg-Free Recipes, Lactose-Free Recipes, Gluten-Free Recipes, and recipes suitable for children to make and to give as gifts.

Each recipe has a side box with information on the yield, advance preparation, special equipment needed, baking temperature and time, and nutritional analysis. At the end of each recipe is a section called "Light Touch," which explains how the recipe was changed from a full-fat version.

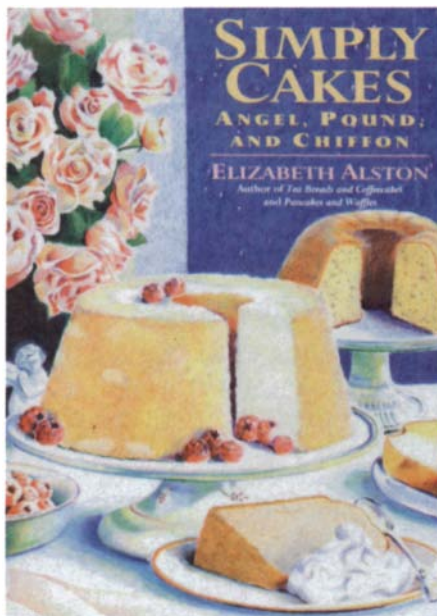
There is an extensive section on toppings, glazes, icings, and frostings that can be mixed and matched with many of the recipes throughout the book. An eight-page insert of color photographs at the front of the book shows how these desserts look. From the tempting pictures, you would never know that

these are low-fat desserts.

Susan Purdy writes recipes that are easy to understand and that include a lot of technique with handy tips throughout. In the headnotes to the recipes, you can feel her deep understanding of her subject. I really doubted that a low-fat cake could taste truly delicious, but this book has changed my mind. If you have only one space on your bookshelf for a low-fat baking book, this is it.

***Simply Cakes: Angel, Pound, and Chiffon*, by Elizabeth Alston.** HARPER COLLINS PUBLISHERS, 1994. \$12.50, HARDCOVER; 129 PP. ISBN 0-06-016988-5.

Simply Cakes is a very small book that is packed with information. Author Elizabeth Alston, food editor of *Woman's Day* magazine, has chosen to focus on just three categories of cake: angel, pound, and chiffon.



She begins her book by giving information about the three types of cake and the ingredients used to create them. A small table explains how to make your own brown sugar by combining white sugar and molasses (the author tells us that this is much easier to use than store-bought brown sugar, which is usually lumpy and must be sifted). A short section on equipment discusses the mixers and pans that are used as well as how to prepare the pans for baking. A useful chart is included

that shows how much batter a particular size pan can handle. The techniques section tells how to measure ingredients and how to tell when a cake is done, two important factors when baking. Information is also offered on removing cakes from pans and on how to cut and store cakes.

Each chapter starts with information about the type of cake and gives a plan of action that offers many tips such as remembering to preheat the oven, having all ingredients and tools handy, and making sure to have the necessary ingredients at room temperature. The recipes are packed with rich, full flavors, such as Triple Ginger Pound Cake, Sour Cream & Walnut Spice Cake, Caramel-Coffee Angel Food Cake, Fresh Raspberry Angel Food Cake, and Coffee-Hazelnut Honey Cake. As the author states in her introduction, she decided to go for intense flavors in creating these recipes so the angel food cakes won't reach the height and volume they usually do. This tradeoff is definitely worth it.

An ending chapter on "Toppings" gives recipes for sauces and flavored whipped cream to accompany the cakes. These cakes, however, are not meant to be frosted or greatly embellished. They are often decorated simply with a sprinkling of confectioners' sugar.

The recipes are clear and easy to follow and for the most part, short. Each recipe gives the number of portions at the top and after the list of ingredients tells which size and type of pan to use. A few of the recipes have variations. There are no photographs in this book, but a drawing depicting the type of cake is on each chapter's cover page.

Simply Cakes is a good place to start for the novice baker. It offers easy-to-make cakes that taste great.

—Carole Bloom is a European-trained pastry chef, confectioner, and cookbook author, who has been teaching her art to both amateurs and professionals for the last fifteen years. ♦

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AGA Cookers 7
 Alos 79
 Antique Mall & Crown Restaurant 24
 Arden's Gardens 87
 Armeno Coffee 85
 Basmati Rice 17
 BG Media, Inc. 86
 Bee Skep Herbarry 85
 Beer & Wine Hobby 84
 Beers-2-You 12
 Belleweather Chocolate Scones 84
 Benson's Seasonings 77
 Bertolli Olive Oil 8,9
 Black Duck Co. 87
 Blue Crab Bay Co. 85
 The Brisker 84
 The British Shoppe 15
 Brugger Brothers 88
 California Culinary Academy 24
 California Winemakers Guild 7
 Calphalon 7
 The Captain's Fresh Lobsters 19
 Castle Video 85
 Chef's Catalog 23
 Chefwear 13
 Chesapeake Bay Gourmet 86
 Chesapeake Express Ltd. 87
 China Replacements 86
 Chocolate Gallery 73
 CMC Co. 87
 The Condé Nast Collection 74
 Contadina 91
 Cook's Garden 77
 Cookbooks by Morris Press 87
 Cooking With Class 25
 Covington Ranch Beef 19
 Cumberland Mills 84
 Deb-El Foods 73
 Desert Glory 21
 Don Alfonso Foods 24
 Don Francisco Coffee 87
 Dubrulle French Culinary School 13
 Duhnke Furniture 86
 DuPont Co. Silverstone 2
 Embellishments 13
 Fabulous Feasts 87
 First Estate Port 5
 Ferncliff House 77
 Flash in the Pan 19
 Floura Wild Rice 85
 Garden Fresh Fruit Baskets 73
 Garden Pantry 78
 Georgetown Coffee 88
 Gloria's Kitchen 87
 Gourmet Coffee Video 16
 Great Plains Meats 78
 Great Southwest Spice 23
 Harry's Crestview Groves 15
 Heartymix 85
 Hendrix Farms 84
 Herb 'n' Lore 86
 Hilyard & Hilquist 15
 Hyatt Fruit Co. 23
 Int'l Home Cooking 81
 Int'l Wine Accessories 77
 Island Traders 86
 James Page Brewing Co. 23
 Jamison Farm 86
 Josey B Corp. 87
 Lamson & Goodnow 81
 Le Cordon Bleu Cookbook/Videos 81
 Lifetime Career Schools 84
 Liz Seeber 85
 Magnolia Products 85
 Mail Order Gourmet 77
 Mangia Software 13
 Mariner Tours 23
 Maytag Dairy 23
 Melissa's By Mail 87
 M.J. Gourmet Gifts 86
 New England Culinary Institute 81
 New Penny Farm 84
 New York Home Brew 77
 Paisley Farm 84
 Peter Kump's N.Y. Cooking School 15
 Pipestone 88
 Piquant Pepper 85
 Professional Cutlery Direct 85,88
 Rafal Spice Co. 85
 Redi-Base 85
 The Rolling Pin 85
 Rums of Puerto Rico 11
 Sam & Sharon 78
 Scottish Crown Ltd. 87
 Scottsdale Culinary Institute 78
 ShawGuides 84,87
 SkimKwik 86
 Somerset Gourmet Reserve Beef 73
 South Georgia Pecan 87
 Specialties by Louise 84
 Specialty Foods 25
 Stonehill Farm 86
 Sullivan College 87
 Sun Burst Farm 88
 Swissco Foods 86
 Takada Maki 12
 Tall Tree 85
 Taste For Gourmet Gallery 19
 Top Hat Co. 84
 Traeger Industries 84
 Trillium International 88
 U. S. Personal Chef 16
 Uncharted Grounds 84
 Upton Tea Co. 88
 Victoria's Vinegars 88
 The Victorian Cupboard 24
 Wilma Saxton 78
 W.E.G. 86
 Western Culinary 84
 Wilma Saxton 85
 Windsor Vineyards 25
 Wood Prairie Farm 86
 The Wooden Spoon 15

RECIPES

COVER RECIPES

Tarte Tatin 69-71
 Suave Coconut Seafood Chowder 67

APPETIZERS

Duck-Liver Pâté Crostini 30
 Salt-Seared Scallops with Boiled Potatoes & Green Sauce 66-67
 Satays 50-51
 Winter Squash Gnocchi With Rosemary Cider Cream 61

BREADS

Chapati 54
 Paratha 55
 Poori 56

DESSERTS, CAKES & PASTRY

Biscotti
 Almond 35
 Macadamia-Nut 36
 Triple-Chocolate 36
 Bread Pudding with Squash Custard 60
 Dahlia Ginger Cookies 31
 Pâte à Choux (Choux Pastry) 75
 Pâte Brisée 70
 Pineapple Sorbet 31
 Tarte Tatin 69-71

MAIN DISHES

Fish/Shellfish

Salt-Seared Scallops with Boiled Potatoes & Green Sauce 66-67

Meats

Pork Satay 50
 Spice-Rubbed Pork Chops 37-39

Poultry

Boneless Quail Stuffed with Sausage & Shiitakes 42
 Chicken Satay 50
 Roasted Duck with Olive & Orange Sauce 28-29

Vegetable

Vegetable Satay 50-51
 Wild-Mushroom Custard Baked in Delicata Squash 60
 Winter Squash Gnocchi With Rosemary Cider Cream 61

SALADS

Grilled Pear & Kale Salad 30
 Sautéed Shiitake Salad 41

SAUCES, CONDIMENTS & SEASONINGS

Chutneys
 Dark Fruit 62
 Lemon 63
 Sweet Mango 63
 Horseradish Mignonette 76
 Rosemary Cider Cream 61
 Sauces
 Green 66-67
 Peanut 51
 Sweet-Hot 51
 Teriyaki 51
 Spice Mixes
 Curry & Green Chile 39
 Provençal 39
 Southwestern 39
 West Indian Rouille 67

SIDE DISHES

Celery-Root Purée 29
 Duck-Liver Pâté Crostini 30

SOUPS, STEWS & STOCKS

Cream of Shiitake Soup 43
 Duck Stock 28
 Fish Fumet 67
 Suave Coconut Seafood Chowder 67

TECHNIQUES

Boiling winter squash 59
 Brewing tea 47
 Canning: open-kettle 75; water-bath method 75
 Carving duck 29
 Grilling satays 49-50
 Growing: horseradish 76; shiitakes 43
 Making biscotti 33-35
 Making crème fraîche 71
 Making Indian flatbreads 52-56
 Measuring gluten development 4
 Menu planning 26
 Pastry making: choux (pâte à choux) 72, 75; pâte brisée 70
 Peeling and cutting winter squash 59
 Retinning copper 4
 Roasting: duck 27-28; winter squash 59
 Sautéing: scallops 66; shiitakes 41
 Searing: pork chops 39; scallops on salt 67
 Steaming winter squash 59
 Trimming duck 28

INGREDIENTS

Apples, peeling and coring 69
 Butter, Plugrá reviewed 14
 Chapati flour: about 52; substitutions for 52
 Duck: carving 29; choosing 27; roasting 27, 28; trimming 28
 Duck stock 28-29
 Garlic, chopped, storing 6
 Horseradish, choosing and storing 76
 Mock duck 12
 Pastry: choux 72, 75; pâte brisée 70
 Pork chops: choosing 37-38; searing 39; seasoning 38; baking 39
 Scallops: choosing 65; searing 67; storing 66; freezing 66
 Seitan 12
 Shiitakes: choosing 40-41; cleaning 41; sautéing 41; growing 43
 Sodium tripolyphosphate 65
 Spice rubs 39
 Starches 18, 20
 Sulfites 6
 Tea, choosing 46-47
 Winter squash: choosing 57-59; peeling 59; roasting 59; steaming 59; boiling 59

TOOLS

Pasta machines, adjusting 4
 Professional stoves for the home 14
 Thali plate 53

Twinkie Technology

Fresh out of college in 1965 with a master's degree in food science, I landed my first big job in the laboratory at Paniplus. A subsidiary of Continental Baking Company, Paniplus manufactured additives for bakery mixes. Additives are those chemicals with unpronounceable names listed last on food labels. Bakery mixes are just like those in small boxes on the baking-needs shelf, but they're packaged in 100-pound bags. Sold to in-store and small bakeries, a 100-pound chocolate-cake mix, baked in different shapes and sizes, can account for much of a day's production. My main job was quality control—making sure each batch of additives did what it was touted to do.

But one day, the big Twinkie problem was tossed my way. The problem? Twinkies had too much substance, therefore the profit margin was low. My job? To figure out how to incorporate more air into the Twinkie batter, how to maintain the size and shape but decrease the amount of solid matter.

I designed my experiment, established the base line, and set to work. The first step was to create my own bakery mix based on the actual Twinkie recipe. The laboratory Twinkie mix, formulated in 20-pound lots, contained specific percentages of sugar, flour, etc., all carefully weighed for the best possible control.

Fresh eggs were not used. Frozen egg whites, with known protein, water, and mineral content, were defrosted, stirred, and weighed so that no extra bit of moisture or protein could throw off the experiment. Egg yolks weren't used: they don't freeze well, they cost too much, and they would contribute weight to the batter.

With Twinkie mix, egg whites, and an arsenal of chemicals in tow, I started to experiment. I baked a mountain of Twinkies, incrementally varying the ingredients, especially the chemicals. Batter was carefully weighed into each pan. Oven temperature and baking time never var-



ied. For accurate results, each cakelette was weighed, measured, and otherwise assessed at exactly the same time after being removed from the oven. Then there was the final test. Someone had to taste each and every batch, very carefully, to be sure that the flavor had not altered. I quickly ran out of volunteers.

Finally, the results were in, the correct amount of chemicals determined, and a lighter, fluffier laboratory Twinkie had been manufactured. The final report had been written and submitted, and I could stop tasting Twinkies.

Was it over? Not quite. Off I went, with the boss, across town for tests at the local Twinkie factory. It was a fun field trip, watching thousands of Twinkies travelling along a conveyor belt. There was, of course, a special pan used only for Twinkies. Each pan, automatically filled to just the proper level based on weight, travelled through the oven. After baking, the Twinkies were mechanically flipped from their pans and continued to travel along until they cooled to room temperature.

Finally, the Twinkies were positioned

for the filling. A monster machine with three "hypodermic" fingers per Twinkie slid out from the sky, impaled a cake, and deposited the "cream" filling. The finished Twinkies moved on, two by two, to the packaging machine. From there, they were delivered to the supermarket.

Did my work really translate into a lighter, fluffier Twinkie on the supermarket shelf? Can I be held responsible? I really never learned. The project was finished, and it was time to move on to a new problem.

More than a quarter of a century later, I mounted the courage to taste another Twinkie. It looked exactly the same, but it did seem a bit smaller. The taste test absolved me of any long-term guilt. My airy, crushable, melt-in-your-mouth Twinkie was not in that package. Paniplus had found a much more ruthless chemist than I.

—Billie Moreland,
Spokane, Washington ♦

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